

The
LONGDENS

D. R. COMPTON

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TO MY MOTHER

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THE LONGDENS

I

THE MOUNTAINS

All day long he had laboriously made his way over the dusty, undulating foothills. The Rocky Mountains in all their majesty were before him. To see them had been the dream of his youth.

Smoke was leisurely curling from a hut on the mountain side. This humble abode interested Robert Tadmire more than the sublimity of The Rockies—he was footsore, tired, and hungry. He quickened his pace.

Mr. Tadmire had come from the great state of Ohio. He had become tired of tilling his father's worn-out acres, and had decided to see the great, boundless West. He was only a lad of seventeen, but like all boys of immature years, he longed for adventure. He thought it would be great sport to "rough it," but, many, many times since, he had longed for home and his mother's caresses—had longed to be on the old, clay farm again in south-eastern Ohio. He had become tired of the shifting, uncertain, unsettled life of travel; in fact, his roaming propensity had been satisfied. He had ridden freight trains so often and so much, and he had walked so far that he was jaded—every atom of his being was crying out for food and rest and shelter and peace and quiet.

The cabin was only a little way up the mountain side, far, far below the timber-line. Robert was fast approaching it. He could plainly see a maiden sitting in the doorway. A thoroughbred shepherd dog was lying prone upon the ground at her feet with his muzzle resting snugly between his fore legs. He growled wickedly as Robert approached, but the girl, in a gentle, but emphatic voice, commanded as she rose:

"Shep!"

Shep resented the rebuke and hastily retreated to the rear of the cabin. Robert regarded the damsel with more than

passing interest. She was simply attired, and had an innocent countenance, noble in its purity. Her name was Julia Nansen. She had just reached the bloom of youth and must have been about Robert's age. Modesty and innocence robed her person like a cloth of gold. Her form was spare, but not frail; willowy, but not tall. She was poorly clad, but she was not ashamed; she was a child of poverty, but she did not murmur, for she had been taught to regard the fineries of dress as the shriveled fruit of vanity. A plain calico wrapper reached to the ground, and moccasins made of the hide of the mountain lion covered her feet. Her brown hair was combed straight back and hung down her back in long braids. Her complexion was fair, her cheeks were full, and they were tinted with the freshness of the mountains. Her voice was as gentle as a snowflake, her eyes were as brown as the oak leaves, her countenance was as pure as an apple blossom.

Robert addressed Julia abruptly:

"Greetings to you, Miss—I'm from Ohio and I'm hungry."

"Why then have you come here?" she asked.

"To see the mountains and get away from my father's 'hard-scrabble' farm," answered Robert.

"Maybe you could do worse."

"Yes, I guess I could; in fact, I concluded several days since that I could do worse. How long have you lived here?"

"All my life," said Julia.

"You like it?" he asked.

"I've never knowed anything different."

"You went to school here?" he questioned further.

"My mother teached me," replied the girl proudly.

"Did I tell you that I was hungry?"

"I believe you did."

"Allow me to say farther that I have the hungry trembles; in truth, every atom of my being is crying out for food," he continued.

"We have got some parched corn," she replied.

"I like bread and butter and coffee better," he said smiling.

"We may have some sassafras tea and some hominy."

"Anything 'll do—I'm starving, I tell you. I'm not a tramp; I'm an honorable chap—I'm willing to work for you to pay."

Julia scrutinized the young man keenly and replied innocently:

"I'll speak to father—he's in the house."

"Thank you, but don't be long, Miss."

Mr. Nansen readily consented. Hospitality does not bloom in the cities, it unfolds in the out-of-the-way places, in the eddies and the sequestered nooks along the stream of life. Julia was pleased, and with dignity and gentleness she invited the wayfarer into their home, saying:

"You may come in."

Robert entered without ceremony and without delay. He forthwith seated himself, after which he was quickly served by Julia. He ate ravenously. Julia innocently took a chair near the youthful adventurer, and not only watched his every action, but she pondered every word that he spoke. After he had eaten some two or three moments, Robert spoke with interest:

"You have a cozy little cabin."

"It suits our needs very well," replied the father who was regarding the young man eagerly.

"It has two rooms?"

"You are right," agreed the older man.

"Is there any game in these parts?" asked Robert.

"Considerable bear and mountain lion," said Nansen quietly.

"How long have you lived here?" asked Robert.

"Twenty years, sir."

"Indeed! and you like it?"

"Yes, we like it—we're compelled to like it; in truth, we're not able to get enough money together to get away," said the mountaineer slowly.

"You came from—?"

"Kentucky. And you came from Ohio, I believe you said."

"Yes, I'm from the border lands of the coal-mining region in south-eastern Ohio. Father hasn't made enough money in ten years to buy a sack of chocolates."

"Your country must be some kin to this," mused Nansen.

"Anyway, I'd like to stay here a few days—until I get rested."

"You may, and welcome; if you do as we do and eat what we eat."

"I want to work for my board—I have no money," said Robert.

"Very well, but we will decide what your work will be when you are rested."

"You cultivate some land?"

"Just a patch," said Nansen.

"You raise—?"

"Corn, beans, and pumpkins. The Indians, you know, were raising these unheard-of products when Christopher Columbus discovered America," explained his host.

After a while the two gentlemen, followed by Julia, stepped outside the cabin to view the mountains. Few wayfarers had ever stopped here, so Julia was intensely interested in this one. It was an event of a lifetime. She had never before met a young man who was so full of vivacity, who stirred her being so completely, and set her heart in such wild commotion. She was experiencing a new thrill, a strange but powerful emotion.

Nor was Robert blind to Julia's admiring glances. There was something about the maiden's rustic, simple attire and modest innocence that stirred the depths of his being. In truth, the sublimity of the mountains did not appeal to him so forcibly as the simple beauty of Julia Nansen.

It was not long until there were unmistakable evidences that Robert Tadmores was welcome to this mountain home, and he knew it. So he remained with this simple-hearted, hospitable family for an indeterminate period. He passed the time in hunting game, clearing the forest, tilling the soil, and living the simple life. Julia was Robert's constant companion. She helped him chase the antelope and cope with the cunning of the grizzly; she helped him clear the undergrowth that was near their cabin door; she helped him sow, and she helped him reap. The smoke from the clearing, the aroma from the fresh-plowed ground, the refreshing sleep which always follows arduous toil, and the charm of the gentleness of Julia's presence, all these gave Robert Tadmores's life a new goal and work a new meaning. Julia's simple, honest ways commanded his respect, his love, his adoration.

Soon they were married. As heretofore, she was his obedient helper. She gladly did his work for him. To her it was a willing and delightful service. She saw to it that he always got the choicest piece of game, the coldest and most refreshing mugs of milk, the nicest pieces of corn bread. She was, in truth, his helpmate, his devoted wife, his ministering angel.

Soon a year had passed, but time had not lessened Julia's love for her husband. Undeniably, she was intensely happy.

A babe nestled close to her bosom, and she loved it as she loved her husband.

It was June. All of the mountain creation was instinct with new life. The trio was assembled in the dooryard. Father and mother were laughing, and the babe was cooing. The wars of Europe, the chaos of Russia, the disarmament of nations were insignificant happenings, in Julia's mind, compared to the incidents in her lover's life. She was intensely interested in everything that he did, in every word that he spoke, in every wish that he made.

The merry mountain stream went dancing along over its pebbly bed not many rods distant from the Nansen cabin door; but it was not more happy than the Tadmores family. The robins were joyfully building their nests in the dooryard, but housekeeping was not more delightful to them than to Julia. In truth, life was full of hope, full of joy, full of ecstasy—it was heaven itself.

Suddenly a horseman drew rein in front of the mountain home. He had in his hand a telegram for Robert Tadmores. It was from Waterloo, Ohio, the village nearest his father's farm. Robert impatiently tore the envelope open and read:

"Come at once. Father is critically ill. The good luck of finding coal on our farm was too much.

"Mother."

Robert read it and re-read it after which he read it to Julia. She wept as she queried:

"And must you go, Robert?"

"It is my duty, Julia."

"I'll be so lonesome," she said.

"I'll be back in a few days, Julia. No, it will not be very long, dear," he replied.

"You'll be back by the time the goldenrod's in bloom?" she asked.

"I think so—anyway, by the time the hickory nuts begin to fall."

Preparations were hastily made for Robert's departure. Mr. Nansen decided to accompany him to the nearest station some forty miles away. They went on horseback. Robert kissed mother and child a fond goodby before he mounted. Julia wept

convulsively. Scalding tears coursed down her youthful cheeks as she said with unbelievable devotion:

"Robert dear, baby and I will come to this boulder every morning and every evening to watch and wait for you, and to meet you when you return."

"Julia, you're a devoted wife," said her husband with deep feeling.

"Robert, every day I'll pray for you that no harm may come to you, that you may come back to us safe and well."

"Julia, above all things, take good care of 'Junior.'"

"I will, Robert, for your sake and for my sake," she promised.

"Goodby, dearest girl."

"God bless you, Robert, dear."

The horseman rode away. Julia was very sad. She sat upon the boulder and eagerly watched her disappearing husband. Each time that he looked back she waved her kerchief frantically and lovingly. Soon Robert was gone—soon he, who was more to her than all the gold in all the world, was gone. To her the sun had gone down and darkness was everywhere. The mountain stream sang its lullaby to her in its vain endeavor to drown the ocean of sorrow that welled up in her heart. After a while she tried to console herself by addressing her babe:

"Baby! daddy, dear daddy, good daddy's gone. We'll be awfully lonesome, baby dear, until our daddy comes back. But he's coming back before the hickory nuts fall; so go to sleep, baby dear, and dream of daddy, dear daddy, good daddy, dear."

II

PLAYMATES

A year passed. The Tadmores estate proved to be very valuable. The coal mine developed into a very profitable one, but the joy incident to the good luck resulted in the father's death, which in a short while was followed by the accidental demise of the mother. The ways of providence are not only devious and mysterious, but they are beyond human understanding. The entire Tadmores estate fell into the hands of Robert, now a lad of only eighteen. Instead of going back to the mountains to his young wife and child, he had gone to college nine months before. His ideals of life had changed. Wealth had brought its temptations. Wearing fine clothes and chasing the bubbles of pleasure had become his all-consuming desire.

Robert's first year at Belmont had been uneventful, except that he had been busy—busy learning fraternity ways, busy studying the demands of college ethics, busy becoming acquainted with the manners, customs and social innovations of university life. It was June again. The college year was ended. After commencement Robert returned to Waterloo, the village of his boyhood. He remembered it as a thriving village of no mean proportions, but when he alighted from the train and beheld the straggling line-up of weatherbeaten, dilapidated, frame buildings that fringed the muddy, main street, he was depressingly disappointed and sadly disillusioned. During his youth it appeared to him to be a city of many wonders; but the village of his boyhood now seemed dwarfed, and the landscape drab. In truth, it did not seem worth while. Everything had lost its charm, its bigness, its glamour. Even the once magnanimous shopkeepers now appeared to be very common and very crude fellows, while the coal mine itself seemed small and inconsequential. As a result Robert was depressed, dejected, sad.

He was carelessly sauntering up and down the village street contemplating the glories of the past and living over again

the happenings of his boyhood, when he suddenly spied Dudley Longden, a schoolmate and erstwhile neighbor. They had been boyhood chums. They had grown up together and had played together during childhood's golden hours. The Longden farm joined the Tadmores farm on the west. Robert stopped suddenly and shouted jovially across the street to Dudley:

"Hello there, 'Dud' Longden!"

"Why, it's 'Bob'—'Bob' Tadmores—*wie geht es*, old scout? I see you're as jolly as ever," replied Dudley cordially as he, accoutered in his faded, patched overalls, started across the dirty, mud street to greet his chum and schoolmate.

"Well, you seem to be the same Dudley that I left behind me last September; the same kindly, clever, genial fellow dressed in the same faded overalls, wearing the same tattered straw hat that you did when I left you," responded Robert who was dressed in the pink of fashion.

"Yes, I'm just the same, Bob; but, somehow, you have changed. Yes, you are different—you are so much more critical, so much less considerate, so much more sarcastic; in fact, 'Bob,' pardon me, but you're a little overbearing and your ways nettle me," said Dudley frankly.

"If you do not respect yourself, Dudley, no one else will," replied Robert.

"True, but your speech has a sting to it—it bites, it wounds, it hurts."

"The world is cold-blooded, why should I not be?"

"Formerly, Bob, you were kind and charitable and considerate, and I liked you; but now your arrogance makes me uncomfortable. What is the cause of this change? Money? Your coal mine? Or a few days of college?"

"Am I not a college sophomore? Am I not on the 'varsity nine and the 'varsity eleven? Do not the students and even the faculty speak my name with respect, enthusiasm?" answered Robert triumphantly.

"They honor athletes at college?" questioned Dudley humbly.

"Honor them? They worship them."

"I thought scholarship was the goal."

"Dudley, your ignorance astonishes me. Why, you don't even know what lies behind the hills yonder. Your life is like that of a bug under a board. You're no more than a family horse. I'd rather be a 'trusty' in a penitentiary than you—he has more liberty and more privileges," said Bob scathingly.

"Now, Robert, your egotism and your arrogance are again—."

"Dudley, why not? I'm in the great, busy, hustling social whirl where perfectly dressed gentlemen mingle with beautifully gowned women. But what are you, Dudley? What can you hope to be? You go to bed so you can get up and plow corn; so you can go to bed and get up and plow corn; so you can get up and plow more corn. You travel in a circle—how can you expect to get anywhere? How do you expect ever to be anybody? A horse in a treadmill lives just that sort of life."

"Robert, we had a family horse once whose friendship I prized—yes, and I prized it next to my mother, too. I'd like to be as honest, as true, as trustworthy as that family driving-horse. He always did an honest day's work; he always stood where we left him; he always pulled more than his share of the load, and if he doesn't go to heaven—"

"Ha! ha! ha! how silly! Horse heaven! The idea! Crazy! Yes, I guess it's really true that one is born every minute," chuckled Robert.

"That domineering spirit of yours—maybe it's Mr. Hyde—is again driving the chariot. Robert, I have feelings. A man doesn't need to be educated to have sensibilities that bleed and pain him when they are bruised and trampled upon."

"Dudley, you're back-woodsy—that's what I've been trying to tell you, and that's what I'm trying to get you away from."

"Your frankness is certainly remarkable, Robert Tadmor."

"To be on the football team is the ambition of every student, but many are called while few are chosen."

"Then scholarship counts for nothing at your school?"

"Listen! In my fraternity is a bookworm. He's a real student. He can reel off Latin and Greek translations by the yard. Frequently he corrects the professors because he knows, but socially he is a stick and athletically he is a nonentity. He's never invited to any of the social functions—in fact he's considered a bore, a blank cartridge, a Keifer Pear."

"Just the same he's respected for what he knows."

"On the contrary the upper strata of girls do not speak to him; they ignore him, they laugh at him."

"That's snobbery. All colleges are not that way," asserted Dudley.

"On the contrary all the world is just that way," declared Bob.

"Girls do lots of things that they regret in after life. They pick a rose and get a thorn."

"You may have some inside information that I don't know about, but I have never yet heard of the girl that regretted that she refused to tickle the fellow under the chin that wore celluloid collars and baggy trousers."

"Do you really think that clothes make the man?"

"I most assuredly do. Appearances count for everything in this world."

"I don't believe it."

"Don't the girls in the department stores spend every cent that they make at the beauty parlor? Certainly; they spend all the money they can get their fingers on for clothes and face powders. Good looks are their stock in trade, fine clothes their show window. Besides, mark this, Dudley, they'll not speak to any young fellow who is not well groomed."

"Robert, you astonish me."

"I do? Then listen to this. There are hundreds and hundreds of people who mortgage their farms, their homes, and even their souls that they may be able to buy an auto. The desire to be in the procession is inborn. Neither do they buy a small car—never. It's got to do sixty miles an hour; it's got to have dash and speed, a starter, a searchlight and cord tires."

"Such a man is crazy," asserted Dudley.

"The first time that you go to a city dressed in a slouch hat and faded overalls, try to speak to some folks whom you have known. If you don't get snubbed I'll buy you a new suit of clothes. They'll simply not see you; no, they'll be interested in the scenery on the opposite side of the street."

"I do not deny that there are snobs in the world, but I assert that there are ten sensible people to every snob."

"Reverse it, friend Dudley, and then you'll have it right."

"Many pumpkins look better than honeydew melons, but they're not; and many good-looking apples are rotten at the core."

"True, nevertheless, you yourself always pick out the reddest and best looking apples when you're looking for eaters. Why, how could a stranger judge you except by appearances?"

"By what you are," said Dudley firmly.

"How could they know? Strangers don't know what you are and there's no X-ray machine that will tell them."

"Anyway, appearances should not influence your friends."

"You still go with Susan Bradstreet?" asked Bob.

"Yes."

"I'll tell you what I can do. I can take her away from you any time that I wish."

"You can't do it."

"You dare me?" questioned Robert as he laughed a tantalizing, humiliating laugh, and then he mischievously repeated, "Do you dare me?"

Dudley hesitated. His head dropped. He was in doubt. He would rather the experiment were not tried upon his girl. Robert saw his discomfiture and chuckled arrogantly. There was initiative and force and daring in Robert's challenge. The college boy looked straight at the farmer lad. Dudley flinched. Fear had crept in. Finally he queried evasively:

"How many students have you, Robert, at Belmont?"

"Two thousand," answered the dapper young fellow with a knowing smile.

"So many?"

"Yes. Now, Dudley, what do you hope to make out of yourself? Tell me your ambitions and your hopes and your aspirations."

"Robert, my plans are not yet made."

"Your father's hills will not even grow a good crop of weeds, so what chance is there for you at home?"

"I will at least learn honesty and hard work," said Dudley.

"Honesty the devil—that animal's extinct. Hard work, you can find that anywhere if that's what you are looking for. Your father will soon put a halter on you and lead you out to water three times a day, the same as he does Old Fan."

"Robert, I fear one year of college has made a fool of you. I formerly was considered your equal and shared your confidences, but now you berate and ridicule me."

"Dudley, I'm merely trying to push you out into the great, busy, teeming world beyond the tree-tops yonder. I, too, was once a fool like you, but I cut the string and let my kite soar, and you can't imagine how grateful I now am that I made the venture."

"I'm contented—what else is there in life?"

"Every wooly worm is contented, I suppose; so is every garbage man, every grave digger, every cannibal in Africa. No, there's nothing in being contented. A gourd is contented. A contented man will never accomplish the purpose for which he was created."

"What have you seen that is so wonderful?" asked Longden.

"Pretty queens dressed in royal clothes and men dressed in the pink of fashion—men, too, who made a fortune last evening while you were milking the cows; men who will make another fortune tonight while you are milking Old Brindle."

"A fortune while I'm milking the cows?"

"Yes, and some men make twenty farms every day—farms that are one hundred per cent better than your father's. If you wish to make money, you've got to go where money flows like a river. You could scratch around on your father's clay hill, like an old setting hen, the rest of your days; but what would you have when the hearse stops at your place?"

"A fellow who has nothing can lose nothing."

"Then you have saved no money?" asked Tadmire.

"How could I, when father has never paid me a red cent?"

"You are joking me, Dudley."

"Oh, I get my board and clothes," added Longden.

"So much?" smiled Robert incredulously, but he was ridiculing.

"Father says that I'm a liability at that; that I'm not worth my board and clothes."

"I'd let somebody have my place, then; and I'd see a little of the world."

"How can I?"

"Make your father pay you. He owes you. Every boy is entitled to a chance. I wouldn't live like a hermit and work like a horse for any living man."

"I haven't any confidence in myself. I fear I couldn't make a living."

"That's just your trouble. But remember this: the fellow who is afraid to venture will never be Lord Mayor. Really, Dudley, your clothes are disreputable—your father isn't treating you right, neither are you treating yourself right."

"People think that they know my father, but they don't."

"I always knew that he was miserly and stubborn, but I never dreamed that he was quite so penurious."

"A boy should not talk about his father, but my father is a puzzle," said Dudley.

"By the way, I see that you still wear the pin."

"Oh yes, and I'm going to wear it as long as I live."

"It makes no difference what happens, we must not forget our duty."

"I agree," Dudley said solemnly.

"If we don't remain true, we're lost, forever lost," said Bob thoughtfully.

"Robert, this pin, this crude wire pin means more to me than I can tell you."

The pin was, indeed, a very crude affair. It resembled a capital G with a capital F running through it perpendicularly. It was worn by the young people living in the hills near and about Waterloo. They were the children and the grandchildren of some ten or twelve families who migrated to and settled in this locality a half century before. They were honest, thrifty, frugal, religious, and hard-working. They had lived, multiplied and died in this little circumscribed world very much like the population that lives under a board. They had lived unto themselves, had taken little or no interest in politics or public affairs, had traded and bartered among themselves, had intermarried, and had become a community of more than a hundred individuals. Naturally, they were clannish, exclusive, independent. They worshipped at their own church and sent their children to their own school. Constitutionally, they were fond of any kind of beverage; and, since prohibition had become effective, they had been making their own wines and brewing their own beers which were considered an indispensable adjunct of every social gathering. However, one day a diplomatic stranger came into their midst, and after several weeks he gradually and cunningly worked himself into the confidence of this clannish but big-hearted people. Several arrests eventually followed, and ever after this, these people were out of sympathy with, if not antagonistic to the government at Washington. As a consequence they and their children had a decided antipathy for the flag and the laws of the land, and they put on this pin as a badge of their disapproval and disregard.

Dudley continued with the following query:

"Are you going to be here all summer, Bob?"

"No, Dudley, I think not—there's nothing here to interest

me. To stay here all summer would be too much like living in a drygoods box. I think I shall go back to New York as soon as I sell my coal mine."

"You have a buyer?" asked Dudley.

"I have two or three, but I have decided that I will not sell for less than a half million," answered Bob.

"I wish father could uncover a coal mine on his farm."

"That is not at all probable, Dudley; for, although our farms join on the west, the coal mine is situated along the east edge of my farm, you know."

"Well, Robert, I must get home and feed the pigs and milk the cows while your New Yorker makes a fortune," smiled Dudley incredulously, but he at once continued: "Bob, I fear I shall never see you again. Something tells me that after you have sold your coal mine, we will henceforth be strangers."

"Oh, I may come oftener than you think, Dud."

"Do, Bob. You have a breezy, aggressive way about you that I like, after I understand you."

"Hear me, Dudley! get away from your father's hard-scrabble farm! Be somebody! See some of the world! Go where fortunes are made while you milk the cows. Goodby, old boy—good luck to you!"

"Goodby, Bob, remember a poor, benighted farmer boy, who is your friend, while you are sipping the sweets of life."

III

THE LONGDENS

It was August. The Longden family was eating its frugal supper of cold, corn bread and potato soup upon an improvised table which had been constructed out of a drygoods box. Mrs. Longden was a charming mother, always kindly, always considerate and gentle. Her countenance was luminous with goodness. She presided at one end of the crude table with her customary grace and dignity and good cheer, while her husband, Hiram Longden, sat opposite to her. If the wife typified a peaceful day in June, the husband's countenance undeniably suggested a stormy day in March.

Hiram was stern, selfish, uncompromising, miserly. He was perhaps forty-five, of medium stature, and walked with dignity and deliberation. He was imperialistic in his commands and expected his orders to be implicitly carried out; it made no difference whether they were possible or impossible. The stubby, jagged beard which covered his face was not an accident—it was premeditated, that he might conserve, that he might save, the ever-recurrent expense of a shave. However, Hiram was not a money-maker. He was always short financially. He was too stingy to make money; in fact, he was so stingy that his friends regarded him as slippery. As a result, it was with difficulty that he now disposed of a balky horse, or a cow that was a poor milker, or a bunch of hogs that had been infected with cholera.

Hiram's eyes were a steel blue, he carried his head high, his carriage was very erect; indeed, he was as straight as an arrow, so straight that his attitude bespoke a degree of self-confidence and self-respect bordering upon egotism.

Hiram was also very punctilious in his church activities, but he did not hesitate to sell his vote for ten pounds of coffee every time that an election day rolled around; neither did he hesitate to take advantage of the Waterloo merchants by putting all the big apples on top and all the rotten ones in the bottom of the basket. However, his religious zeal really

reached the zero mark each Sabbath when the collection plates came around. It was then that the religious atmosphere in Hiram's vicinity became very frigid; nevertheless, his customary religious zeal soon revived when the danger zone of finance had been safely passed. It was then that he breathed more freely and shouted "Amen" lustily and with unbelievable vigor.

Too, there was another time when Hiram's fall from grace was very pronounced; it was in the springtime when he tried to teach the young calves, one by one, the difficult art of drinking milk out of a pail. Hiram always placed two of his fingers in the calf's mouth as a first aid in teaching the animal the difficult art of drinking milk. It seems that every calf's first impulse is to make repeated lunges and plunges in the direction of the bottom of the milk pail. Accordingly, each and every one of Hiram's calves invariably splashed milk all over a large portion of Hiram's farm, all of which caused Hiram to swear vigorously and unreservedly. However, matters did not reach a climax until Hiram beheld himself after he had emerged from the cattle-barn besplattered and dripping as a direct result of the showers of steaming, hot milk. It was then that words completely failed him. He was sure that there was nothing in the English language that could do justice to the occasion. Hiram's temper not only flared, but it sometimes registered two thousand degrees Fahrenheit, the melting point. So we are compelled to denominate him a fair-weather church member; which is, by the way, an unbelievably large and growing organization.

Nevertheless, Mr. Longden possessed a native shrewdness which always served him well in his dealings with his fellow men. Especially was this true during the many heated arguments in which he so often indulged, and which he enjoyed so much. He could neither read nor write, and was bitterly opposed to every form of education. He always cited himself, when the question arose, as a living and convincing refutation of any argument in favor of any form of intellectual discipline. Besides he pronounced education a waste of both time and money, and consequently the work of the devil.

At the evening meal on this hot August day, the three younger Longdens sat upon the father's left, while on his right sat Dudley and his eldest brother who were, respectively, eighteen and fifteen years of age.

Dudley was unusually tired. The heat of the day had been enervating, and his work had been arduous. He had been going the rounds with a threshing machine for more than three weeks, and naturally the monotony of it was now becoming irksome. However, his father had considerably spared him the trouble of collecting for the work; in truth, the father had habitually and daily collected Dudley's money and banked it in his own name.

The evening meal was not very pretentious or nourishing for a young man whose every atom was crying out for food. However, Dudley always refrained from criticizing the bill-of-fare, lest he might wound the feelings of his mother whom he truly loved. Besides, he always endeavored not to stir up the bumble bees of his father's wrath, inasmuch as he not only had a hair-trigger temper, but Dudley well knew was both selfish and unreasonable. So ordinarily Dudley said nothing, accepted his lot without a murmur and went about his work quietly and energetically. But, somehow, he was more aggressive this evening than usual. A wee voice within seemed to urge him on. His courage did not vacillate—it had initiative and defiance. He spoke boldly:

"Father, I am now a man—did you not realize it? I—"

"Who told you?" interposed the father crabbedly.

"Father, I do a man's work, and I ought to wear a man's clothes and earn a man's wages."

"Yer nothin' but a saplin'—nothin' but a saplin', I say. Yer a mere lad with a whole lot of things yit to larn."

"Father, I've been wearing your cast-off overalls all my life, and I've never complained, but now I certainly deserve something better."

"Somethin' better, eh? Then yer wantin' to be a dude, eh?"

"No, father, not that; I merely wish to be respectable."

"All dudes talk about bein' respectable."

"If I should die tomorrow, the county would be compelled to bury me. I haven't a cent that I can call my own. I'm a pauper. I have nothing, absolutely nothing," spoke Dudley heatedly.

"I feed you, don't I?"

"But, father, I'm a young man, and naturally I want to associate with young people who dress well."

"Nobody's holdin' you. You kin go after you git yer

feedin' did, if you git up at three o'clock the next mornin' and go about yer work."

Dudley's father had never before made such a generous proposition. This was more liberty than the son had been accustomed to, or, in truth, expected; so he accepted his father's statement at a liberal discount. After Dudley had partially recovered from his astonishment, he answered:

"But all the other young people wear good clothes."

"Don't you know that clothes hain't nothin' but a fad? Clothes is some of yer education stuff. Clothes don't no more make a man er a woman than whitewarsh makes a fence, or leaves make a tree."

"Yes, but the trees wear beautiful clothes, and they get two suits each year: a green one in the spring, and a red and gold one in the autumn. All nature enjoys the beautiful; so do all respectable people delight in the decent."

"This here present generation hain't fer nothin' but show. It wants to be coddled and perigoricked and pampered all the time. It don't know nothin' about hard work er hard times."

"Father, I'm eighteen, and you've never given me a cent that I can recall."

"You git yer board and yer room, don't you?"

"Any ordinary farm hand gets these and twenty dollars a month; and that's all that I ask," said Dudley.

"You hain't as good as an ordinary farm hand," stated his father.

"You know that I look after your affairs better than any farm hand you ever had," added the boy.

"'Tain't so. Yer exaggeratin'," his father replied brusquely.

"I say that I've done more work than any farm hand you ever had."

"Anyway, no farm hand would be permitted half the liberty you take," said his father.

"For example?"

"Who patches yer overalls? Who sews yer buttons on? Who sees that you have plenty of bed clothin' in winter time? Who cuts yer hair? Who greases yer boots?"

"Mother."

"And still yer sayin' that you don't have no more consideration than a farm hand."

"I hope you are not claiming credit for what mother does."

"Who supports yer mother?" asked Mr. Longden.

"You'd have to do that whether she looked after me or not," said Dudley.

"Jist what I expected—unappreciative, ungrateful and as shiftless as the rest of this generation."

"Now, father, as I was saying, you ought to give me a little spending money. I don't ask very much, but reading is my chief joy, and I'd like to have a little money to buy books with."

"Books the devil! We've—"

"Hiram!" interposed the mother in a kindly but commanding voice.

"We've got far too many educated fools now," continued the father.

"Now, father, I have a longing for knowledge. It's as natural for me to want to read as it is for you to want to save money."

"What air you a studyin' to be? An anarchist?"

"No, no, father; nothing of that sort. I want to know what smart men have said and done, how they have acted, how they have lived and what they have thought."

"Yer readin' every night 'til twelve o'clock. Where do you git yer books?"

"Borrow them," said Dudley.

"Why not keep on borryin'? That's a whole lot cheaper than buyin' 'em. What air you a-kickin' about? If yer smart, I say, you'll keep on borryin' 'em."

"I'd like to have at least a half-dozen books of my own."

"No more books, I say! You never git up until half-past three now, and if you had books of yer own, you wouldn't git up till four. Thirty minutes a day is all I kin afford to contribute to yer education, not sayin' nothin' about the coal ile."

"Father, you don't give a fellow half a chance."

"A half a chance? What's the matter with you? You wouldn't be able to borry no books at all, if it was not fer my good reputation."

"Perhaps not," said his son.

"Then what air you a growlin' about? What more do you want? I'll buy you no books. Anyhow, education has ruined more boys than whiskey ever did."

"Why, father!" exclaimed Dudley.

"Don't you dare to dispute my word, sir. I never had no education and I'm proud of it," growled Hiram.

"Someone else has to do your ciphering for you."

"That's no sign they're one half as smart."

"Father, you're a very peculiar man—"

"I'm a perty smart one, anyhow."

"You say books make rogues, and clothes make dudes; still, all respectable people have them. I don't understand you. Somebody's wrong."

"'Tain't me."

"I say, I can't understand how everybody can be right."

"Everybody hain't right, but I am. I understand it, I do. These here boys what wear good clothes, dance and spark the girls all night, and stay out till mornin', air on the road to the devil, and my children air not goin' to travel that road."

"Besides all the other boys have a horse and buggy," continued Dudley insistently.

"Now, Dudley, you hain't satisfied, air you?"

"I'm trying to get you to see the situation from a boy's standpoint."

"A boy's standpoint, the devil!"

"Father! You're wrong."

"If you hain't a likin' what I'm a-doin' fer you, if you hain't a goin' to appreciate my sacrifices fer you, you kin go to—"

"Hiram!" interposed the mother in her customary gentle, but positive voice.

Hiram hearkened, for he knew that behind that gentleness there was an uncompromising firmness born in the village of justice from which there was no appeal, and in which there was no compromise. The mother continued diplomatically:

"Have you fed the horses?"

The husband was temporarily frustrated if not discomfited by his wife's intervention. She would not allow her unreasonable husband to have a free rein when he became domineering, or when his temper flared like a meteor. Someway, she could curb his ungovernable wrath by her quiet, unobtrusive ways; by her tact, and her gentleness, in her own inimitable way. The silence that followed the wife's interruption was oppressive for the moment, but Dudley broke the spell by saying:

"Mother, Bob Tadmire has returned from college. He looks as sleek as a peeled onion and is dressed like a prince."

"But you must remember, Dudley, that Robert is rich,"

answered the mother in her customary voice which seldom gave offense; then she repeated in a meditative voice, "Yes, Robert is rich."

"He says that he has been offered a half million for his coal mine," explained the son who loved his mother supremely.

"Robert will do well, I think, if he accepts—in other words, Robert could do a whole lot worse," replied the mother with a benign smile upon her noble countenance.

"Mother, I was always Bob's superior upon the playground and in the schoolroom. I could out-run, out-jump, out-play, and out-'figger' him any time, any where. I can't understand, mother, why he should be so fortunate and I so unfortunate."

"Dudley, has Robert been talking to you? Has he unsettled you? Remember this, my son: not always is good luck a blessing."

"But mother, I certainly am entitled to a little pay—I don't want very much. God knows that I've worked hard in my efforts to make the farm profitable."

"Your board's all you're goin' to git," thundered the father decisively.

"Negro slaves got that much, father—yes, negro slaves got potato soup."

"Negro slaves went to bed hungry, if you please, sir. I know; I don't keer what yer history says—I lived durin' them stormy times."

"Anyway, father, I'm not getting a square—"

"Dudley!" interposed his mother in a voice as gentle and seductive as the south-wind, but as uncompromising as the roar of the oncoming tempest.

"Dudley! if you hain't satisfied, you know what you kin do—" roared the father, but he was not allowed to finish his thunderbolt.

"Hiram!" interrupted the wife in a peremptory voice after which she continued: "there was a man here this afternoon to see you."

"Who was it?" snapped the husband angrily.

"A man to buy our tobacco."

"From the Trust?" he asked.

"I think so," she replied.

"What did you tell him?" he continued.

"That he'd have to see you."

"If he comes agin, you tell him: 'You hain't got money enough!'"

Nothing more was said for a moment or so, when the father continued:

"We've got to git a whole lots more fer our tobacker than we used to—I say it takes a whole lots more money when the children git to demandin'—"

"Hiram!" interposed the mother, and then she addressed the children: "You children may be excused—I see you've finished your supper."

The children hastened to the dooryard, glad to be away from their father's depressing presence. Father and mother were now alone. The conference lasted more than an hour. What was said, no one will ever know save husband and wife; but we have a right to assume that Mrs. Longden, like most mothers when their children are being unjustly assailed, defended her offspring as vigorously as any mother-bird ever defended her young ones when they were being assailed by a ruthless foe. Mr. Longden, after a long while, emerged from the kitchen doorway and went directly to the barn with bowed head, and, evidently, in a serious frame of mind.

IV

A CRISIS

Ten days elapsed. It was Saturday evening. Hiram Longden had just returned from Waterloo. His countenance was pale, his head bowed, his actions showed irritation. He was angry. A mother's intuitions are never wrong. Mrs. Longden was sure that something had gone awry, that a storm was brewing. Thus far her husband had said nothing. The wife humbly followed him as he nervously mounted the stairs. Dudley, as usual, was in his room reading. The father abruptly and unceremoniously pushed the door to his son's room wide open and thundered:

"Where did you git that there book, sir?"

"I borrowed it, father."

"Borried it? You stole it."

"I beg your pardon, father."

"Don't I know? Hain't the gossip all over Waterloo?"

"What gossip, father?"

"That you've been reg'larly enterin' McDuffy's bookstore once a week at midnight."

"And that I've been stealing books?"

"Prezactly."

"It is not so, father."

"Where did you get that book?" asked Hiram again.

"As I told you, I borrowed it," said Dudley.

"Who from?"

"The McDuffy store."

"Mr. McDuffy personally lent the book to you?"

"No, sir."

"Then you stole it," replied the irate father pointing a menacing finger at his discomfited offspring.

"I'm going to return it, father—I'm not going to keep it. I have returned all of his books unsoiled and untorn."

"All of his books? For God's sake! How long has this here business been goin' on?"

"Two years, father."

"Then you've been a sneak thief for two years?"

Dudley made no answer. He was chagrined. He regarded the floor intently. The father continued violently:

"Dudley Longden, my son, Hiram Longden's son, a thief, fer two years. My God! My God!"

"Father, you wouldn't give me any money with which to buy books."

"A son of mine a thief! A reg'lar, self-confessed thief."

"I so much wanted to know, father, and learn and be somebody."

"It is as I expected: this is one of the children of education. It ruins more of our boys than wine er the women. Any educated animal is dangerous, I tell you."

"Father, I did not soil one of Mr. McDuffy's books. I wrapped each and every one of them in a clean paper before I opened it, and I always washed my hands two times before I read it. Father, I did not damage the books a particle."

"Just the same you're a thief."

"I have returned every book except this one, and I'm going to return it soon," said Dudley.

"You air a thief, I say," repeated Hiram.

"You wouldn't give me any money."

"Nevertheless you air a thief, I repeat."

"If I am a thief, father, what are you?"

"Don't you dare to insinuate, sir; don't you dare to try to implicate me in this here foul affair, and try to drag my good name in the dirt."

"Father, don't get excited; I shall tell Mr. McDuffy all about it and pay him whatsoever he asks for the use of the books. But, father, I fear I shall do the same thing over again, if I have no money to buy them with; books are the very meat and bread of my life, I tell you. I simply cannot live without them."

"Oh, bosh! You talk so silly. I'd think you'd have sense enough to let books alone after you've disgraced yerself, yer father, yer mother and yer home. It'll be a blot on yer entire life; you can't live it down. When you die it'll still hang over you like a dark cloud and it'll be a stain upon our family name after yer gone. While yer livin', the neighbors will pint you out as you pass, sayin': 'There he goes, that there book thief. He had a good father and mother, but he's a crook—watch him!'"

"Father, I expect it is wise that I go away—I would not disgrace my mother for life itself. Yes, I shall go away," spoke Dudley earnestly as the great salt tears coursed down his sun-burnt cheeks.

"I insist upon it. I demand—"

"Hiram Longden!" interposed his mother in a mandatory voice that was more commanding than usual—a mother's sympathies are always with her son, no difference how heinous his crime might be. She forthwith continued in a more gentle voice: "Supper is ready."

"The whole village is excited. They're discussin' this affair of Dudley's day and night. We air spoke of as a gang of thieves. It's a stunnin' blow, I tell you. Why, it's simply arful. I never drempt that one of my children would bring this here disgrace upon me and my fair name."

"Hiram, come to supper," commanded the mother who had a peculiar quaver and unsteadiness in her voice.

"I have always argified that books air the greatest curse of the day, and now I'm convinced," defiantly asserted the father whose reputation for truth and veracity in that vicinity would be expressed by "minus X."

"Come to supper, Dudley," summoned the mother tenderly.

"It's no wonder that Dudley has been neglectin' his farm work. Fer two long years he has been readin' these here cursed books 'til twelve o'clock. It's no wonder, I say, he don't git up till three-thirty. It's no wonder the hosses have been half-curried, half-fed, and half-harnessed."

"Hiram! I think that's enough," interposed the wife; then she continued tenderly: "Come on to supper, Dudley."

"Mother, I'll eat no supper this evening," answered her son considerably.

The parents forthwith quitted the room, but the father, in his nagging way, continued to deplore the fact that he had been everlastingly disgraced by his ungodly son, all of which Mrs. Longden steadfastly refused to believe. When the storms come and calumny assails, maternal affection never wavers. It remains resolute, never questions, and always gives the offspring the benefit of every doubt.

The evening meal was an awkward, painful one. Few words were spoken. The mother ate no supper, neither did the children. Dudley, in the solitude of his room, suffered intensely, but he could not understand the enormity of his crime as out-

lined by his father. As he saw it, he had harmed no one. Nevertheless he was sure that a crisis was at hand and he had already decided that no self-respecting person could, under such circumstances, remain at home any longer. He was sure that he did not wish to cast any additional reflection or bring any additional disgrace upon the family or the family name.

His father's farm was the stage upon which Dudley Longden had enacted many a day of hard toil for which he had received little credit and no pay—but he loved his mother supremely. He so much needed the inspiration of her gentleness and the direction of her considerate judgment. Life would be a dismal wilderness without her; he didn't see how he was going to get along without her, but life is only part sunshine and (thank goodness!) it is only part rain—the one to be enjoyed, the other to be patiently endured.

The next morning was Sunday and it dawned bright and cheery. It was August. All creation seemed to be touched by the spirit of gentleness and holiness. Even the atmosphere seemed to be under the magic spell of peace and reverence and good will to men. Dudley awoke very early—at break of day. The birds were already chattering in the cedars at his window. As soon as he was thoroughly aroused, he wondered what had happened. Had he had a horrible dream, or had he reached the crisis of his life? Then he remembered what it was all about, and he dreaded to meet the future. Soon he heard his mother in the kitchen and quickly descended the stairs. She was just starting a fire in the cook stove. Tears at once came into his eyes as he entered. He tried to hide his weakness by saying:

“Let me build the fire, mother.”

“You are kind, Dudley.”

“I wish you would get me a bite to eat, mother; some bread and butter and coffee is all that I care for—I don't want to be here when father comes down.”

“You are not going away, are you?”

“Yes, mother—in the morning.”

“Please don't go, Dudley. I'll be so lonesome without you.”

“It will almost break my heart, mother, to leave you, but henceforth it will not be pleasant here; so I've decided that it will be best for me to go.”

“Your father was angry last night; he'll be sorry this morning.”

“Father has always been antagonistic to me and my ambi-

tions. He has never been in sympathy with anything that I wished to do. He has not only been ungrateful for what I've done, but he has never spoken one word of encouragement that I can recall."

"It's just his way, Dudley."

"It may be, but it's a mighty poor way, mother. Perhaps father and I are too much alike to get along harmoniously—he seldom antagonizes the other children."

"Your father couldn't run the farm without you, Dudley."

"He thinks he could, and I expect he could, mother. I find that no one person amounts to so very much in this world—the world moves on without him just the same."

"He can't run the farm as well as you, Dudley."

"Mother, have I disgraced you?"

"Not that I know of, Dudley."

"Was the taking of those books such an awful crime? As much of a crime as father makes it appear?"

"Dudley, you were not altogether to blame."

"Then I was in part?"

"I fear you were a little to blame, but Mr. McDuffy will forgive you when you frankly tell him the facts."

"I didn't soil a single one of his books, mother."

"I know you didn't, Dudley. Breakfast is ready, dear."

"Thanks, mother. You've always been kind to me—I'll never forget you, mother. Wherever I go, I'll always treasure the charm of your presence and the kindness of your voice."

"Dudley, I trust you'll change your mind about going," entreated his mother whose face was now suffused with tears.

At this juncture Mr. Longden cleared his throat in an adjoining room. Although his breakfast was only half eaten, Dudley quietly but quickly arose and hurried away.

V

GOING AWAY

Dudley first went to the barn that he might avoid his father, for whom he now had a feeling of disregard if not antipathy; thence he and Collie went to the woods. How he enjoyed the woods! Here he found freedom—freedom to think, freedom to do whatsoever pleased his fancy, freedom to enjoy and drink-in the nectar of the great out-of-doors. Here he had spent many, many delightful hours, and naturally it was with pleasure that he now strolled through the undulating woodlands living over again the days of his youth.

He first visited the slippery elm trees, the viscous bark of which he had assailed so often and chewed so vigorously. All around about the slippery elm trees were the sturdy sugar trees from which he had gathered the overflowing buckets of sugar-water many a day in March, pouring it into barrels and hauling it to the crudely improvised camp where the furnace fire was roaring and the syrup was bubbling and sputtering like a pot of mush. Nor had he forgotten how he had roasted long rows of frozen apples before the glowing coals of fire. He remembered how he had baked walnuts in the hot ashes, to while away the long, tedious hours of the night. Here, too, while the sugar-water boiled and bubbled and evaporated, Dudley made maple taffy and maple sugar out of the skimmings from the luscious syrup.

Yes, those were carefree days when responsibilities were light, when joys were many, when life was full of zest, when the future was full of hope and promise. It was, in truth, the dessert course of his earthly existence and he knew it not. It is strange that at the refreshment counter of life the dessert course should be served before the meats; nevertheless, such is true in the grand dining hall, where we are not always served according to our wishes.

Dudley went slowly trudging along through the woods and over the precipitous hills. He remembered well how he had been charmed by the sudden and unexpected appearance of the

wild flowers in May, and how he had been equally delighted with the chattering of the squirrels and the falling of the hickory nuts after the first killing frost of October.

A little farther on was the babbling brook. He could now hear it in the distance as it went dancing along on its journey to the sea, little mindful of Dudley's joys or Dudley's tears. Here he had gone swimming time and again, and here he had frequently fished with a bent pin and an humble earthworm for bait. Once he caught seventy miniature sunfish at one sitting which he believed rightfully entitled him to a niche in the fisherman's Hall of Fame.

He walked on and on and crossed the creek. On many a dark night he, in company with his eldest sister, had gone this way in search of the intractable milk cows, which on the darkest, dreariest nights persisted in getting as far from the cattle-barn as possible. Here the hoot owls were the thickest and the most mournful. Their terrifying cries had time and again caused the chills of terror to chase up and down Dudley's backbone in rapid succession. At this very spot he always expected momentarily to meet the ghost of "Old Faithful," face to face. Old Faithful was the deceased family driving-horse whose remains had been tenderly laid to rest here a few years before. It was passing strange that the terrifying hoot owls should be the thickest in the very haunts and environs of the ghost of Old Faithful. This was a part of the salad course of a boy on the farm.

Dudley now crossed a second creek at the exact point where he had often crossed it in quest of those wandering, misguided "sookies." He usually found them in an abandoned cemetery which was situated at the very farthest corner of his father's farm. The fence about the cemetery was in a state of decay and neglect. The kine delighted to break through and seemed to like to congregate among the monuments. Here Dudley fancied that he saw, on every dark night, the ghosts of the departed marching and countermarching in preparation for some unusual act of terrorism. But it was when the "sookies" suddenly raised up out of the darkness from behind the ghost-like monuments that his knees actually smote each other in consternation, and caused cold beads of perspiration to stand out upon his forehead. All this actually made the farmer boy weak from fright, and even the thought of it now caused him to wonder why any self-respecting milk

cow should select such uncanny, nocturnal surroundings even though daylight revealed nothing but peace and tranquillity.

On this bright Sabbath morning, Dudley took his leave of all these scenes of horror and endearment. He did not go to church, although it had been his life-long custom. He wished to avoid his father; so, instead of going to church he played with Collie to whom he most dramatically narrated his troubles, assuring him that he was going away on the morrow and that he might never see him again. Collie cocked his head on one side as though he fully understood the gravity and the pathos of the situation.

That afternoon he held an impromptu conference with Mabel, his eldest sister, saying:

"Mabel, I'm going to leave you."

"Oh, I wish I was goin' with you."

"I'd be glad if you could go in my place, Mabel."

"Where are you goin', Dudley?"

"I don't know."

"But you'll be back in a day or so?"

"I may never come back, Mabel."

"Never, Dudley? Did you say 'never'?"

"Yes."

"Why are you goin' away?" asked Mabel as the tears welled up into her blue eyes.

"Father and I can't agree."

"I know that father is cross and grouchy, but I don't think he means half what he says," said his sister.

"Maybe not—oh, it may be my fault; I'm not blaming anyone. I guess I'm of a sensitive temperament, but I simply can't live in such an atmosphere of doubt and dread."

"When are you goin'?"

"In the morning. Now, Mabel, you must take good care of mother."

"Haven't I been helping her?"

"Yes, but you must help her more than you ever helped her before. Mother is all right. She's a mighty good mother, and she has done lots for us children. How I hate to leave her, Mabel! But I'm sure that father will be glad to see me go. He's taken a disliking to me, so I may never come back. You must build the fires, Mabel, wash the dishes, and hoe the garden for mother. She'll be a friend to you when you have no friend."

Mabel was now in tears. To hide her weakness she kicked the ground with the toe of her shoe, and when she finally answered there was a tremolo in her voice:

"Please don't go, Dudley; I'll be so lonesome."

"I must go, sister; father doesn't like me any more."

"I'm so sorry, Dudley—you'll write to me?"

"Certainly I will, and you'll write me if mother gets sick?"

"Sure I'll write you, Dudley."

"And you'll tell me how many eggs you get next spring, and what funny things Collie does, and how many turkey nests you find?"

"I'll write you everything, Dudley."

"That'll be just fine of you, Mabel. I wonder if you'll send me some candy when you make up the maple syrup skim-mings."

"Of course," answered Mabel as she gradually hopped and skipped and edged toward the house, for Dudley's going away was a painful subject to her, and she wished to get away from it as soon as possible.

That evening Dudley went early to see Susan Bradstreet. She was expecting him and was watching and waiting for him at the front yard gate. As usual he wore a fuzzy beard, a pair of faded overalls, a slouch straw hat and a pair of disreputable plow shoes—he had no others. Susan Bradstreet loved Dudley, but she would have loved him more ardently had he worn more respectable and more stylish clothes. Susan had never taken dramatic art, and she had been consistently taught to conserve, but she had always tried to dress as attractively as her means would permit. This, you know, is a feminine trait, so it must be praiseworthy. Susan had tried to be neat and clean for her own sake and subconsciously she had tried to be attractive and chic that she might touch the heartstrings of the young men of her community.

She was dressed this evening in a pink calico trimmed in white, and she had tied a pink ribbon over her front hair and down around her head, Grecian style, which she thought gave her a stylish, up-to-date appearance. When Dudley came nearer, she accosted him gayly:

"What's the trouble, Dudley? You look so sober."

"Oh, nothing, Susan; except I'm going away."

"Where are you goin', Dudley?"

"I don't know, Susan."

"When are you goin'?"

"In the morning."

"Why are you goin'?"

"Oh, father and I can't agree, so I thought it best to go away somewhere."

"You'll still come and see me every Sunday, Dudley?"

"I will if I don't go too far. You know father will not let me have a horse and buggy, so I'll still have to walk."

"But you're not goin' too far, are you?"

"I can't tell, Susan."

"Then you'd go away and leave me all alone?"

"I'd hate to, Susan, but you can't tell; I may never come back."

"Oh, Dudley! Then you don't love me any more."

"You have no idea how much I love you, Susan."

"But, Dudley, if you loved me truly, you wouldn't leave me that way."

"I love you truly, Susan; yes, I love you with all my heart and all my soul."

"But, Dudley, if you loved me truly, you'd get a job near by, so you could see me often."

"Maybe I shall. I will if I can."

"That sounds better, much better."

"Robert Tadmores said he could take you away from me any time he wanted to," said Dudley.

"Robert said he could take me away from you?" asked Susan.

"Yes."

"Robert's a swell fellow."

"Could he?" asked Dudley.

"I should say he couldn't, Dudley—but, say! he's a fine fellow and he's a swell dresser."

"I told him he could not go with you."

"Is he comin' over?"

"He might—why do you ask?"

"So I could have my hair curled and my evenin' dress on when he comes."

"Would you let him in?" questioned the boy.

"No, of course not—oh, I might let him sit in the doorway."

"But would you let him come into the parlor?"

"Never—but if I should, I'd give you a chance to git away."

"Me a chance to get away!" exclaimed Dudley.

"Yes, I wouldn't want to embarrass you."

"Then you'd go with him before you'd go with me?"

"No, I didn't say that."

"If we were both there, which one would you choose?" persisted the boy.

"If you were there, Dudley, of course I wouldn't invite him in."

"Why not, if I were there?"

"It might offend him, and he might never come back again, if he found another man in the house," she answered.

"Then you'd want him to come back?"

"Of course not, unless you'd go so far away that I'd never see you again."

"But, if I go away, I'd send for you, so we could be near each other."

"You would? Oh, that way! How clever you are, Dudley! Then of course I wouldn't let Robert come in."

"I didn't think you would," said Dudley.

"Oh, I wouldn't think of such a thing. No; I wouldn't let Robert come closer than that big gate down by the road."

"I knew you were as true as the maples, as sure as the spring that bubbles up in our spring-house and never fails. I love you more than I love the robins or the blue birds or the daisies."

"How sweet of you, Dudley! Now, don't forget to send for me."

"Forget? I'll never forget so long as the roses are red and the sky is blue."

"Then I'll always be true to you, Dudley—always."

"In sickness and in health?"

"Sure."

"If some stylish, wealthy, good-looking young fellow should court you?"

"I'd remain as true as the mountains," she replied.

"If I should lose everything?" he asked.

"Ever! Always! Forever! Whatever betides I'll remain true."

These fresh and sweeping avowals of steadfastness seemed to be entirely satisfactory to Dudley, and naturally he believed Susan implicitly. The dark, depressing cloud of his going away was partially driven away by Susan's frank and

rosy confession, and he took his departure bidding her an affectionate farewell.

Dudley was now, naturally, about to be thrown upon his own resources, and this worried him above everything else. He lacked initiative, for he had always been commanded. He had been schooled to obey; he had never been taught to assume or cope with responsibilities. Naturally he now, more than ever, felt his own weakness and helplessness.

When he reached his home, Dudley went directly to his room. He wanted no supper, for he was not hungry, his appetite was gone. He had reached the crisis. His mother carried a lunch to his room and he ate a few bites of it to show his appreciation of her kindness, but he had nothing to say. Words failed him and he dreaded the morrow, but this did not change the fact that the time to say "goodby" was drawing near.

Dudley retired, slept intermittently, and arose at break of day. His mother was already preparing the morning meal. She was very sad and Dudley himself was sorely depressed. He had tied a clean shirt, a suit of underwear and some minor valuables in a red bandana which he carried in his hand. He was extremely nervous and walked uneasily to and fro. Thus he had entered the kitchen and his mother had enjoined cordially:

"Sit down, Dudley; breakfast is just ready."

"Mother, I'm not hungry; besides I haven't time. I must be going."

"You certainly have enough time to eat your breakfast, Dudley."

"If you'll fix me a piece of bread and butter, and put it in a sack, I'll eat it on the way."

"Dudley, I have some cookies in a sack ready for you—they are still hot. I knew you liked them so much and liked jelly-bread so well that I got up early and prepared these for you. Here, too, are two dollars which I have saved up, a little at a time, from selling produce. Your father doesn't know that I have this and he need not know anything about it. If he did, he'd want it; so take this money—if I had more I'd give it to you—put it in your pocket where you will not lose it and say nothing about it."

"You're always kind, mother."

"I see that you have your pin on, but, Dudley, you must be

careful—confide in no one; he might prove a traitor and cause you serious trouble.”

“I’ll be careful. Well, I must be going, mother, and if you ever need me, send for me. Goodby, mother—I love you.”

Dudley hung his head to hide his weakness as he quietly moved away. His mother, too, was in tears as she answered:

“Dudley, I’ll pray for you every evening and every morning. I’ll pray for your safety, and I’ll pray that God will care for you and always guide you aright, Dudley.”

“Don’t worry about me, mother. I’ll make matters all right with Mr. McDuffy as I go through Waterloo; and rest assured, mother, that in the future I’ll not take a grain of corn that belongs to any man.”

“I’ll trust you, Dudley. You have my implicit confidence. Come back and see us often, Dudley—come at least every week. I’ll be so lonesome without you. When you’re gone I’ll have no one in whom I can confide.”

“I’ll see you often, mother, if I’m not too far away.”

The mother now affectionately drew her son to her and kissed him repeatedly. Soon Dudley was trudging down the lane toward the gravel road half a mile distant. He was carrying a heavy load. He was leaving his home not from choice, but that he might maintain his self-respect. He went stumbling along, bowed under the weight of his father’s ingratitude, and the loss of his mother’s cheery companionship. He regarded the loss of his mother’s cheerfulness as irretrievable, and that is why he suffered so. Dudley resembled a sire of seventy as he went plodding along down the lane—bent, faltering, staggering, half-dazed, half-conscious of what it all meant. Still, he knew, subconsciously, that he was leaving his home forever. Never did mortal man feel his utter helplessness more keenly and more completely than did Dudley Longden at this moment. Nevertheless, his plans were made. His course was mapped out. The Rubicon had been crossed. He had started to meet the cold, unsympathetic world with a determination to do his best, no matter what the cost. He could do no less than fail; he could do no more than succumb.

VI

BREAKING HOME TIES

Dudley's immediate destination was his grandfather Longden's, some twenty miles away. The village of Waterloo was the only town on his route. Here he stopped to return the borrowed book, to confess his wrong and unlawful practice, to explain why he did it, to assure the bookseller of his steadfast purpose to pay him for the use of the books as soon as he found a job. Mr. McDuffy was moved by the earnest frankness of the boy. He pointedly made it plain that breaking into any store for any reason whatsoever was vitally wrong; but that any boy who had such worthy ambitions and such an avaricious father ought to be exonerated at least on this, the first offense—these anyway should be palliating circumstances.

Dudley was delighted. He was expecting to be severely reprimanded; but instead of severity he found only charity and gentleness. It was one of the pleasant surprises of his life. In fact, Dudley had not realized the enormity of his crime, until his father upbraided him so caustically. Now he had in a way been exonerated and naturally his spirits were not only buoyant, but effervescing like a lighted sparkler on the eve of Fourth of July. He thanked Mr. McDuffy profusely and assured him that he should be well paid for his kindness and the valuable lesson he had taught a thoughtless boy.

Dudley now continued his journey toward his grandfather's home, enthusiastically and joyfully at first, but wearily and indifferently later when he became physically worn out. The day was hot, the road was dusty, the trip was arduous, but on and on he went. He had too much nerve and too much pride to turn back. When he had covered half the distance, he was fatigued, and he rested under a spreading beech which skirted the highway. He at once became reminiscent, thinking of his mother, of Collie, of the old sugar camp, of the cool, refreshing swimming hole and he faltered. He longed to be back home again, toiling on his father's depleted acres.

He could work, and struggle and slave and avoid his father. He could endure ingratitude. After all, what was life if he was not satisfied? What cared he for pay? His mother was there. She was "for" him. Life meant but little to him without her. Now his ambitions were jaded and he was physically enervated. He was lonesome, and more and more he longed for home and its many endearing charms. Finally he ate his lunch slowly and meditatively. Soon he relished it, and he was refreshed. His spirits became more buoyant, and the depressing sensations gradually left him. The world was more charming and his courage was more daring. Ambition again humbly mounted the throne and he continued his journey.

It was almost dark when Dudley first sighted his grandfather's commodious farm house. The hoary forest trees almost screened the patriarch's home from view. He had been thrice married, and his more recent wife was not a lover of children—especially grandchildren. She pronounced the "brats" too knowing, too bold, too "previous," too "nosey," too much at home. However, Dudley was cordially received and shown every courtesy, but when on the morrow he begged for a job, the atmosphere became suddenly frigid. As long as he was paying a friendly visit of a few days' duration, he was welcome; but when there was a possibility of his becoming a continuous guest beneath his grandfather's roof, he was no longer welcome.

Dudley quickly sensed the frigidness, and it chilled him—chilled the very marrow in his bones. He quietly but quickly arose and went to the barn to hide the tears that came into his blue eyes. His father and grandfather had virtually told him that he was not wanted. He was lonesome, dejected, disheartened. He did not dream that he would be unwelcome at his grandfather's hearthside, and he was completely crushed.

In truth it does seem that the majority of mankind are selfish and mercenary; that, if you do not give as much as you take in this world, you are not welcome. Yes, everybody must pay—must pay in money, or property, or nobility, or kindness, or social ascendancy, or love, or breezy conversation, or gold, or beauty; else he is railroaded away to the county farm. It is an inexorable law of life that you must give as much as you take, that you must pay for what you get, else you are "persona non grata."

Dudley not only ate sparingly of the evening meal, but he had little to say. His buoyancy and his good-cheer were gone. After supper he politely announced that, if they would excuse him, he would retire that he might continue his journey early on the morrow. No regrets were spoken; no questions as to his plans or destination were asked, no well-wishes were showered upon him and no one wished him godspeed.

So at break of day on the morrow, Dudley arose, dressed, went to his grandfather's corn-crib, took four large ears of yellow corn, deliberately cut the ropes that anchored him to the past, and started. His lunch was coarse and not very nourishing; but he reasoned that he could sustain life for a limited time, if necessary, by feeding upon parched corn, acorns, and the water that babbled in the brook. True he still had the two dollars which his mother gave him, but this was his reserve to be used only in a dire extremity.

Dudley Longden had no plans. He had started, but he did not know where. In a way he was drifting, but subconsciously he was headed toward the city of New York, the metropolis of the world in wealth and commerce and population. It had been the ambition of his waking existence to see New York. He had read how it had more Jews than Jerusalem, more Russians than Petrograd, more Irishmen than Dublin, more Germans than Leipsic and he had longed to see this modern Babel. But he little realized how big or how far it was. His sensibilities were, in a manner, benumbed and he was indifferent. However, there was an unyielding determination in his breast, and stubbornness in his heart. Of one thing he was sure; he would never again, so long as he had health and strength, annoy his father or his grandfather with his presence. It was not exactly a feeling of bitterness, it was an unwavering determination in the secret recesses of his heart that in the future he would annoy no man with his presence, lest he might not be welcome. He had burned the bridges behind him, and his one ambition now was to enter the city of his dreams and succeed.

On and on he went, and after a while he became very, very hungry. He was too proud to beg, too honorable to steal, but he must have food. In spirit he was not a tramp, but in truth he was one, or rather he would have been one had his purposes been less honorable and his moral fibre more compromising. He soon came to a pretentious farm house. It was

an inviting and undoubtedly a prosperous place. He stopped, entered the yard and knocked at the kitchen door. A very stout woman answered. She had a wicked temper—it was written in every line of her bulging physiognomy. She, too, was avaricious, her countenance indicated it. Dudley addressed her courteously:

"I am not a tramp, lady, but I am hungry."

"Then why are you a beggar?" snapped the housewife peevishly.

"I am working my way to New York, mam."

"You're not walkin', I hope," she asked.

"I am."

"Now I know you're nothin' but a 'Wearie Willie.' It's eight hundred miles to New York."

"I know it's a long way, but I'm no tramp. How can a fellow ride if he has no money?" he asked.

"He kin always stay at home," she replied.

"Not so, madam. You are mistaken, I say. I could not stay at home."

"I tell you that you're nothin' but a dirty, lazy, good-fer-nothin' tramp. You can't fool me."

"I beg your pardon, lady—I'm willing to work. I ask no charity."

"I hain't never yit seed a tramp what was worth buryin'," she snapped.

Dudley glanced over his shoulder, saying:

"You were talking to—"

"You."

"I beg your pardon, but I have a good mother."

"Then you should not have left her," said the woman.

"I would not be here, had my father and I been able to agree."

"All boys nowadays air too knowin'. Yes, these here up-to-date, good-fer-nothin' boys air arfully wise."

"Can't you give me a job, good lady? I'm hungry, I tell you. I'll not come into your house if you're afraid of me."

"I'm not afraid of anybody," answered the housewife as she straightened up, threw her head back, and clenched her fists; then she continued, "First of all, you need soap and plenty of it; second of all, I don't like yer looks—yer clothes air a give-away."

"Clothes don't make a man."

"No, not always—I'll tell you what I'll do; you saw up that pile of rails out there and I'll give you somethin' to eat."

Dudley turned, beheld the pile of rails and all but fainted. His heart, like Joshua's sun and moon, stopped. The rail-pile resembled a mountain. Tired, hungry Dudley heaved a sigh. There must have been twenty wagon-loads of rails in that pile, but Dudley was hungry. He accosted the lady:

"I certainly would be grateful if you should give me my lunch first."

"Smooth, hain't you? I've been buncoed before," she said.

"I am weak with hunger; I'll do better work and more of it if you'll give me a lunch first," answered Dudley.

"I tell you, I've been 'worked' before."

"I'll not take advantage of your kindness. I'm honest. I'm true blue."

"That there's what they all say."

"You certainly can't expect much of a hungry man."

"I hain't expectin' nothin' of you, but you git no lunch until you do the work. If that hain't satisfactory to you, you kin move on."

Dudley saw the utter futility of further argument, and started toward the rail-pile with a heavy heart. He was angry, too, because his sense of honor and justice had been maligned. He had been classed with the crooks and the underworld of society. He suddenly turned and said:

"Pardon me, good lady, but it is people like you that are the cause of this so-called 'tramp-menace' today. You make tramps out of honorable boys and honorable men. If a man is denominated a thief and a jailbird, what incentive is there to be honorable? In other words if you are generally considered a scoundrel what inducement is there not to be one? You don't give a fellow half a chance. Many, many people in this world are less fortunate than you, and it isn't their fault. My type of Christianity teaches charity, enjoins everybody to feed the hungry and clothe the naked.

"Now you kin go. I'm not keepin' you. I don't keer to hear yer lectures. There's the gate right down there."

"You don't go the 'second mile' do you? You don't even go the 'first mile.'"

"You don't know what you're talkin' about. You've got wheels."

"I've got to have something to eat. I could steal, but I'm too proud and too honorable. I'm—"

"How air you! Too proud to steal! I'd hate to lay a silver dollar on the walk in front of you and look the other way just one second."

"Madam, it's no wonder that socialism and Bolshevism have got such a tremendous start in the world. People like you are to blame."

"I thought you was hungry."

"I am, but I thought I had a right to tell people about their faults—people don't hesitate to tell me about mine."

"You git off the place if you don't like my ways. I'll not have another sassy word out of you."

"Pardon me, if I have said anything impolite—I did not intend to. I'm willing to work, but you certainly expect lots of work for your lunches. They must be big and delicious. I'll work an hour and then you can pay me in food what you think I have earned."

Accordingly Dudley went about his prescribed work. The lady slammed the door and went about her work. She was a surly, calculating hussy. Dudley worked honestly and industriously for an hour and a half, and large was the pile of wood that he sawed. The men came to dinner from the fields with their teams. They regarded Dudley intently and curiously. They smiled and winked at each other as they eagerly watched him toil while they were en route to the house. They ate their dinner greedily, ravenously, spoke slightly of the landlady's new boarder, pretended to be angry that the job of wood-sawing had been delegated to another, and after a while went back to the fields. Dudley sawed wood, paying no attention to anyone. Finally he was so weak that he could scarcely talk. He went to the house, rapped, and said:

"Madam, you see what I've done—pay me accordingly. Remember that I ask no charity."

"Don't be alarmed—you'll git none here."

"I'm not soured on life—I believe the world is good and honorable."

"I see that you have sawed only a small part of the rail-pile," she remarked.

"You are the judge and the jury. I'm anxious to know how just people are in Pennsylvania," he said.

"What if I should give you nothing?"

"If your conscience approves such a course, I will be content. As I said before, such people as you will decide whether or not we shall have Bolshevism, or peace and harmony in the United States tomorrow. The under class will endure so much and no more."

The farmer's wife now reached for a sack in which she had placed Dudley's lunch, took out one-half the contents, and defiantly handed the balance to him. He accepted it politely, thanked her courteously, and departed. When he had gone down the road a few rods he opened the sack to see "what he got." It contained an onion and a piece of stale bread upon which was placed a meager amount of doubtful butter. Dudley sighed. Tears came into his eyes. He walked on, but he was disconsolate, and muttered:

"This is certainly a tough old world. That woman is a designing shrew. She's a hussy and a vixen and a crook. She deserves misfortune; in fact, I wish it upon her."

This was, indeed, a rough old world, but on and on Dudley went. Finally he came to a creek. It was dusk. He hunted and found an abandoned tin can, built a fire, parched some corn, ate it ravenously, and put up for the night in a fence corner. He was so tired and so weary that he did not awake until the sun was a full half hour above the horizon. He hurriedly parched some more corn and found some sour grass which he ate with a relish. How he longed for a cup of mother's coffee, and a dozen of mother's cookies! But these were now impossible, and he stoically muttered to himself:

"Why cherish delights that are forever gone?"

A new ambition was aflame in his bosom. Many ambitions have been extinguished by untoward circumstances and many have become a roaring blow-torch—it remained to be seen in which category Dudley was to be classified. His ambition now was to make the goal even though life itself was the cost. During the coming week Dudley had many experiences; but none of them was more harrowing than that of sawing rails for an hour and a half for an onion and a piece of bread and butter. He persistently continued his course, subsisting principally upon acorns, beechnuts, parched corn and a few meager lunches which he received as pay for doing an occasional odd job for some housewife along the way. He met many rebuffs, had been ordered off the premises many times, was assailed by many unkind words, had occasionally been

threatened with a loaded gun, had often been attacked by growling, barking canines but he had remained sweet and serene through it all. He was certainly being disciplined in the school of hard knocks.

One Sabbath morning he came to a church. The parishioners were just gathering for services. Dudley, too, entered. The country folk seemed very sociable among themselves and chatted very freely. They turned and gazed intently, if not rudely, at Dudley as he entered and then they went by on the other side. His clothes were too faded, too threadbare, too ragged, too much out of date. His beard needed a shave too much and his face a cake of soap. After church Dudley awkwardly arose and waited for someone to speak to him. He craved companionship; he hungered for some good mother to speak a word of encouragement to him. No one came near and he was lonesome. How he wanted to talk to somebody! Even a bark from Collie or any other dog would have been gratifying. But the members one by one quitted the country church and finally Dudley was alone with the janitor. Dudley accosted him:

"Going to lock up?"

"Yep," answered the janitor indifferently, jingling his keys as he spoke as a hint for him to get out.

"Could you tell me where I might get something to eat?"

"We work for what we git around here," answered the man.

"You never help a fellow up? Never give a boost when a fellow's down?" asked Dudley.

"This here community don't believe in feedin' tramps."

"I'm no tramp, but that makes no difference—some tramps are just as good as some church members."

"Who was a tellin' you?" asked the janitor.

"I thought charity was a part of Christianity."

"Not around here—it's all we kin do to pay the preacher."

"I'm not a tramp; I'm a farmer boy on my way to New York in search of a job."

"Better stay away from that there place, son, if you know what's good fer yer boneyard—it's too big fer you; you'll git gobbled up."

"It can't be any chillier there than it is in western Pennsylvania," said the boy.

The janitor now put the key in the door, saying abruptly:

"Well, it's time to go, partner."

"Pardon me; I didn't mean to delay you."

The janitor made no answer, locked the door, and soon was going down the road whistling vociferously. Dudley was not embittered. His brief conversation with the janitor had done him a world of good. He went plodding on. He thought nothing of the coldness and selfishness of this little country congregation. Such was life. He had before heard congregations, and preachers, too, sing: "Blest Be the Tie that Binds," and straightway en route home from church refuse a poor man a small basket of apples that were wasting in the orchard. Dudley had a long time since learned that such is the greed and selfishness of human nature—his own father was a living example. Yes, Dudley was now accustomed to rebuffs; he was hardened to disappointments.

At last he reached the central portion of the great state of Pennsylvania. It was the first of September, just one month since he so affectionately bid his dear mother goodbye. He had now, in a way, become inured to this plodding, shifting, changing sort of life. He was no longer looking at the things behind, but was pressing forward toward the goal.

He now came to a dairy farm with its pretentious, newly-painted barns and its herd of immaculate Holsteins. The landlord was filling his silos. Dudley approached and frankly accosted him:

"Sir, are you one of those fellows who are willing to give a boy a chance?"

"What kind of a chance?" asked the farmer.

"A chance to work," answered the boy.

"That depends upon the boy."

"I'm honest. I'm a farmer boy and I'm hungry."

"I've never seed a tramp yit what wasn't hungry."

"I'm not a tramp, if you please."

"You certainly look it."

"I have a good mother, sir. In fact she's the best woman that ever lived."

"But jist why did you leave her?"

"My father is an unreasonable man. He wouldn't give me a chance. He wouldn't give me a cent and I worked hard for him," explained Dudley.

"Where air you goin'?"

"Do you blame me for leaving home?"

"I haven't heard yer father's side of the question. He might tell a different story," said the man.

"He couldn't and tell the truth."

"Where air you goin'? Do you know, er don't you keer?"

"I'm going to New York," aid Dudley.

"New York? That's no place fer a boy—you'll wish a hundred times that you had never seed the place."

"It's too late now to change my notion. My plans are all made. I've got too much grit to turn back. I can't any more than starve. I'm going to show father that I'm no oyster."

"Have you ever worked any on a farm?"

"All my life, sir; I'll do you an honest day's work."

"I've been fooled so often."

"I'll sleep in the barn. You can bring me a lunch in a sack after you finish your meal. I want a job for only two weeks, and then I'll move on. I need and must have some spending money."

"How much money did your father give you before you left home?"

"He didn't even give me a smile," said the boy ruefully.

"How long have you been on the road?"

"More than four weeks."

The dairyman thought a moment and answered:

"I'm goin' to give you a chance, but if I ketch you a stealin' even an ear of corn, er if you git smart er shiftless even once, I'll juggle you around some."

"All I ask is a chance," said Dudley.

"Can you handle a team? Do you know how to feed and curry a hoss? Did you ever milk a cow?" asked the farmer.

"I can do all these."

"Do you expect pie and cake every meal?"

"I didn't have such at home. A little bread and butter and a piece of meat in a sack now and then, and occasionally a cup of coffee is all that I ask."

"You talk fair enough."

"I'll eat and sleep at the barn," added the boy.

"What air you goin' to charge me?"

"Whatsoever you decide that I am worth—I believe you'll be fair."

"You may hitch up the bays and begin haulin' corn to the silos."

Dudley made no answer, but promptly obeyed. He worked

hard that day, cared well for the horses at eventime, ate his lunch, went to sleep on the hay in the cattle barn, arose at break of day, fed, curried and harnessed all the horses, and was waiting for orders when his boss came to the barn. He addressed Dudley cordially:

"You're certainly an early riser."

"If you'll get me a milk bucket or two, I'll do some of the milking while you eat your breakfast," replied Dudley cheerfully.

"You're certainly makin' a good start."

Thus the days went swiftly by. Dudley was always polite and always did more than was expected of him. He ate at the barn and did not consider himself too proud or too good to sleep at the barn. Finally the two weeks were gone, and Dudley addressed his employer as follows:

"Well, I believe my two weeks are up. I certainly thank you for your kindness."

"You are not goin'?" asked his employer.

"Yes, I'm going. I do not wish to wear my welcome out. I trust that I have done you some good. I certainly thank you for your consideration, and if your boy ever comes to New York, and gets stranded, I'll certainly come to his rescue, if I hear about it."

"After all, Dudley, we're all made of sand and clay, and there's not very much difference in us. None of us has a reason to be proud, unless we're honorable."

"Oh, I think there's lots of difference in people. At least I have found it so; some people are made of hardpan—they're stingy; some of black loam—they're wealthy; some of chaffy soil—they're drones and non-producers; some of sandy soil—they're choleric and burn up easily; some of a combination of all these—they're the salt of the earth."

"I guess, Dudley, there's more difference than I thought."

"Really, you're the only 'white' man that I have met in thirty days of travel."

"Thank you, but I'll give you two dollars a day, if you'll stay with me this winter."

"You're a real gentleman, and I should like to stay with you, but it would wreck all my plans—I'm going to try to be somebody."

"I feel sure, Dudley, that you'll succeed. You have the

spirit that wins, but if you'll stay with me this winter, you can eat and sleep at the house."

"I certainly thank you, but I simply can't. I'd be losing too much time."

"Anyway, Dudley, stay with me two more weeks."

Dudley counted the days and weighed all the probabilities, and answered after several moments:

"You've given me a square deal; you've treated me like a father, and I'm going to stay with you two weeks longer—we ought to get your work in pretty fair shape in two weeks—but I'll continue to eat and sleep at the barn. This will save your wife considerable work. I have too much respect for my mother to cause any woman any unnecessary trouble."

"You're certainly considerate, Dudley; yes, you're a prince."

"This arrangement will not seriously hinder my plans, and I feel that I owe it to you to help you all that I can."

In a few short days it was a morning in early October. Two weeks had come and gone. Time speeds rapidly on when a man does his best, and lingers when he idles.

Dudley had wrapped his meager personal effects in his red bandana, and was ready to continue the journey. His employer was present and counted him out fifty dollars. Never before had Dudley seen so much money. Naturally, he was not only astonished, but he was profoundly and profusely grateful, saying:

"It has been two long months since I left home, but this is the first time that I have been treated like a 'white' man. I certainly thank you. I'll not only remember you, but I'll endeavor to pass this kindness on to someone who has been as unfortunate as I."

The employer answered feelingly:

"It is a part of my religion, Dudley, to give every worthy boy a chance. Perhaps I don't shout 'Amen' as loud in the meetin' house as some, but I try to follow the Golden Rule. I once was a boy, and I think I know what it means to get a square deal. Goodby and good luck to you, Dudley. May God bless you."

Dudley was pleased. He found one man who was grateful, one man who seemed to appreciate what he had tried to do for him, one man whose words were full of encouragement, which is worth as much to a boy who is down and out as money. He carefully consigned the fifty dollars to his inmost pocket

and regretfully started—yes, regretfully, for life seems to be an unbroken series of broken friendships and heart-rending disappointments. But Dudley could not tarry longer—he had started toward the world metropolis, the goal of his mounting ambitions. His earthly possessions now aggregated fifty-two dollars which he guarded diligently day and night, for this money, plus some more, was the lever by which he expected to raise himself.

VII

UNIVERSITY LIFE

Vacation days were over and it was time for study and application. College students from all over this broad land had returned to their universities with their customary air of self-importance. They are always buoyant, always aggressive, always mildly but innocently egotistical. Like Alexander the Great, they are proud of their achievements and eager for more worlds to conquer. It is difficult to say whether college life instills this spirit of conquest, or merely draws unto itself a self-confident type of young hopefuls.

Belmont University was situated some sixty miles north of New York City. The returning students were greeting one another cordially and with glowing words of good-cheer. A spirit of geniality pervades every student body, and the warm and lasting friendships that spring up in college find their counterpart nowhere else upon old mother earth. Nowhere can you find an aggregation of young men and young women whose ambitions, aspirations, and ideals are so pure and so noble as those of a body of college students. Naturally a black sheep is to be found in every flock—a sheep whose ideals are perverted and perverse, whose conceptions are sordid and depraved, but he is the exception and not the rule. The average intelligence and idealism of a student body is unsurpassed.

College students may be mildly officious and harmlessly egotistical; they may expect the everyday man to sidestep for them; they may have the idea that the world is theirs for the asking; they may think that all creation is expectantly and breathlessly awaiting the day of their graduation: nevertheless, they are a good-natured group of scouts as harmless as doves, as innocent as babes, and the day of their disillusionment will speedily come when they enter the world of affairs. It is then that they will realize that they count but one in the mad rush for prestige and power; it is then that they will fully realize that they have been beaten by a little, dried-up,

red-headed lad who has never seen a college or heard the voice of a college professor.

College is a little world of its own. It is cut off and out of touch with the everyday world. It is segregated and in a sense it lives unto itself. Still it has the same sharp competition for social honors, the same mad rush for positions of preferment, the same struggles for leadership that characterize the outside world. It has to battle against the same social barriers and castes that permeate and exist in the real world of affairs. While there prevails a spirit of mutual helpfulness there is also effective that other sterner, but no less exacting law that separates the fit from the unfit.

College life at Belmont gradually became more vivacious and more animated as the new students became better acquainted with college ways and college life. Class spirit soon manifested itself. Class rivalry became paramount. Class yells were given with vigor and class enthusiasm ran high; all of which is a harmless diversion which the ultra-conservative, who has lost the bloom and vivacity of youth, denominates "foolish," "crazy," "devilish." But the great unwashed have forgotten that times have changed. They do not understand the laws of effervescence, especially the laws of youthful effervescence.

Surplus human energy will always assert itself some way some how. Father probably did not do what his son is now doing, but he probably did things that were more devilish and more infernal.

It was not long until the sophomore ladies attended chapel accoutered in black sunbonnets and aprons trimmed in old gold. These were the sophomore class colors. This quite naturally aroused the class spirit of the freshmen to a fever heat. It is proverbial that freshmen and sophomores are avowed and bitter rivals. The ladies in sunbonnets were a queenly aggregation. In truth their dignity and their modesty held the radical, untutored freshmen at bay.

While the freshmen were organizing and trying to decide what course to pursue, they were frustrated by the disconcerting news that the sophomore class colors were fluttering at the top of the flagpole which was near the entrance to East College. No greater disgrace can be heaped upon a class than that of an adversary's class colors proudly floating above its own. The freshmen hurriedly rushed outside where, dis-

heartening though it was, they plainly saw the sophomore class colors defiantly soaring and floating and fluttering triumphantly at the top of the flagpole. Naturally, this touched off the dynamite. Both sides at once brought up their heavy artillery. It was the signal for the beginning of the annual class "scrap," which takes place each year between the freshman and sophomore classes. There was a concerted and a mighty rush to get possession of the rope at the base of the flagpole. The freshmen were thoroughly determined that the sophomore class colors should not float on high. The sophomores banked themselves in solid formation about the base of the pole and prepared for a vigorous defense. On came the raw-boned, over-confident freshmen like a drove of maddened buffaloes. They undeniably had the courage and the determination, but they lacked strategy and finesse. They might well have been denominated an unfinished product.

It is indeed marvelous, if not unbelievable, what a year of college will do to a student. He enters, green, awkward, diffident, helpless, poorly clothed, not very promising, only partly civilized, with many things to learn; he emerges from college at the end of the college year a veritable Chesterfield. His modesty is gone, he parts his hair in the middle, he cultivates a mustache, uses a cane, wears silk champagne hose and nonchalantly smokes one cigarette after another in quick succession. When he entered, he was a diamond in the rough, but one year has polished the diamond until it glistens like frost on a cold winter night.

In this class scrap the diamond had not yet been worked upon; it had not undergone the polishing process. No, these freshmen had nothing to recommend them save a rough and ready spirit to conquer and overcome. They swept down upon the more astute sophomores like an untamed hurricane. It was a battle royal. Hats were smashed and crumpled until nothing remained of papa's hard-earned ten-dollar greenback but the rim. Collars and neckties were ruthlessly jerked off and summarily demolished. Coats were split in twain, noses were bleeding, but the battle still continued. It was great sport. Cruel? Ruthless? Why so? What young man would bow the knee and surrender his colors when scores of ladies fair are watching, and cheering, and shouting "bravo" from the college windows on high? Any ambitious young sir would,

under such circumstances, rather be a dead lion than a live canine.

As is always the case in combats of this sort, some of the smiling young hopefuls were not masters of themselves. They could not control their hair-trigger tempers. They were not greater than he that taketh a city. Their tempers flamed, and fistic encounters followed, presumably in fun; but really in earnest. They were joking on facts. More noses soon were bleeding, and more teeth were soon extracted, but painlessly—no!

Everybody now was panting. No one would acknowledge defeat. Suddenly another onslaught occurred. The same spirit that stopped the Germans at Belleau Wood and started them in a goose-trot back toward home, was now manifest among these college boys—the spirit that knows no defeat, the spirit that will not surrender. Now all went sprawling upon the ground where they puffed and wallowed and wriggled. More clothes were torn, more faces were bleeding, more teeth were extracted, more of papa's hard-earned money was torn up. A few individuals now became vicious, lost their heads and wanted to fight, kill, destroy.

Finally a sophomore noticed that his class was considerably out-numbered. He decided that it was useless to try to hold the fort longer, so he stealthily, but quickly hauled down his beloved colors while the others were engaged in entertaining their partners. He was sure that he was unseen. He seized his class flag and ran toward the entrance to East College. He hurriedly entered the hall of learning and was just starting up the stairs when he was surprised and halted by a fleet-footed freshman who had witnessed and wisely understood the sophomore's strategy. The other classmen quickly followed, and soon they, too, had engaged in the skirmish. A veritable tug-of-war ensued. They see-sawed to and fro like a drunken man. The stairway balustrade was unable to stand the strain and gave away with a tremendous crash. The students fell upon one another in a great heap. The president of the university, a kindly, logical man of an intellectual cast with an unusually prominent forehead and a noble mein, appeared at the top of the stairs. He had more than once warned the students to be careful to remember who they were, where they were, and what they represented, but his admonition failed this time. He snapped his fingers vigor-

ously and spoke harshly, but his words like some of the seed of the sower, fell upon barren soil. The students were now upon their feet again and the combatants surged back and forth like the waves striking the breakers. How the battle line weaved! How the battlers tugged and lunged and pulled! But give away? Never! Surrender? Never! Acknowledge defeat? Never! The spirit of conquest and love of victory was paramount. It was in-born and deep-rooted. It was instilled at Valley Forge; it flowered in a great civil war; it boldly and defiantly asserted itself at Santiago and St. Mihiel.

Robert Tadmire attended college at Belmont. He was a sophomore, and he was one of the aggressors in the class scrap. Now he and another rich man's son were furious, enraged. They were spoiled children. Much money, like much wine, had made them mad. They were pampered sons. Money and what money could buy had made fools of them. Young Tadmire at the first opportunity seized his antagonist by the throat and shook him—shook him as puss shakes a mouse—shook his antagonist until he was limp and gasping. Robert was now alarmed lest he had severed the fragile thread of life, but he was so angry and so excited that he gripped his assailant more resolutely. Nearby battlers saw what was happening, and, fearing a tragedy, they separated these two infuriated sons of wealth. Each was bleeding profusely; each was panting like a wounded stag at bay; but neither would surrender. Such is college life. Such is human life. Such is one of the many unfortunate happenings that characterize a life of ease and luxury.

But the freshmen finally got possession of the sophomore class colors and spirited them away. The diffident, freshman ladies applauded vigorously and shouted "bravo," "bravo," exultantly; while the sophomore ladies submissively rolled their sunbonnets in their aprons and quietly stole away as does the vanquished always. The class yell of the victorious freshmen could be heard far and near as this or that victor went scooting across the campus like an Indian warrior making preparations for a pow-wow after a successful marauding expedition.

Soon the fury of the storm had abated; soon the injured had been "arnachied" and poulticed and bandaged; soon all was as quiet as the desert, save the recitals of the many thrilling ex-

periences of the victors. The peacemakers were very busy that evening, for many bruises had to be poulticed; many clothes had to be patched or made new; many choleric brothers with bleeding feelings had to be placated; else there would be strife and discord in every fraternity clubhouse in Belmont.

It was now near eight o'clock in the evening. The freshmen knew that war had been declared, and that articles of peace had not yet been signed, so they followed up their advantage with vigor. They formed in groups of six, each of which waited in some dark alley or ambushed behind some gnarled trees awaiting the advent of some misguided, luckless sophomore. Some twenty-five unfortunate second-year fellows were in this manner picked up, securely tied, loaded into waiting automobiles, and quickly spirited away to parts unknown. When the machines had gone some twenty miles, they were stopped, and their captives were compelled to alight; thence they were escorted through a dense woods and across a deep ravine to a secluded, barren valley where the twenty-five captured braves were tied to trees with clothes-lines and trunk straps and captured class colors. All night long they were tethered thus. All night long they were guarded and taunted and ridiculed by the exultant freshmen. Robert Tadmire was one of the captured and one of the taunted. He was so angry that he could think of nothing mean enough or vile enough to say; he cursed, he foamed, he gritted his teeth, he stewed, but all to no avail. He was tied hand and foot. The freshmen were resolute and unrelenting. They could not be coaxed, bribed, or bluffed. They simply tormented young Tadmire all the more.

Finally it was break of day. The grey in the east gradually changed to saffron. It was then that the freshmen formed a circle and, in solemn procession, two abreast marched about each uncomfortable sophomore singing that classic dirge, "Old Grimes is Dead." After this, the most touching portion of the ceremony, had been concluded, they shaved the crown of each unhappy sophomore's head and painted his cheeks with nitrate of silver, which would undeniably leave its finger-prints for many a day.

After this weird and most unusual ceremony had been performed, the autos of the jubilant freshmen were started that they might get away quickly should they so desire. They then loosed the most even-tempered and most harmless sopho-

more who, in turn, was given the privilege of freeing his comrades in misery after the freshies were gone. The first-year fellows hurriedly sought their machines and started toward Belmont, leaving the sophomores to reach their alma mater as best they could.

The sophomores—the tired, hungry, famished, humiliated sophomores—were now strangers in a strange land. Fortunately a few of them had money. With this they bought milk and eggs and bread and butter; but when they finally reached Belmont, they resembled a tattered, footsore, nondescript contingent of Coxey's army.

The wily freshmen remained in the offing for a few days, allowing the more impulsive sophomore hotspurs to cool off and become reconciled to their humiliation which undoubtedly was grievous and painful to contemplate.

VIII

DUDLEY MEETS A STRANGER

Three weeks after Dudley earned the fifty dollars that he consigned to a secret place in the recesses of his ragged clothes, he was still persistently pushing on toward the metropolis. He had neither added to nor taken from his reserve. Dudley had never before known the joy of possession, so naturally this fifty dollars was a pleasure unspeakable to him.

It was one of those delightful mornings in late October when the atmosphere refreshes and invigorates, when it is a joy to live and a pleasure to work. However, the roads were dusty, and Dudley was getting tired of the daily grind. It was telling upon him and he was becoming debilitated, jaded, enervated.

Everything now indicated that he was nearing the confines of some big city. The frequency of passing automobiles, the numerous signboards, the myriad telephone poles, the countless telegraph wires, and the broad cement highways all indicated that he was approaching no mean city.

It was mid-afternoon when Dudley overtook a nondescript lad of questionable lineage. He was a boy of about Dudley's age, very talkative, very officious, and shrewd beyond his years. He had been buffeted and booted about by a greedy, selfish world so much and so long that it had made him cunning and calculating. His unsteady blue eyes mirrored a soul with many scars. Tobacco juice stained his irregular teeth and oozed from the corners of his drooping mouth. His complexion was sallow, which probably was the result of too many cigarettes, or too little soap. He accosted Dudley cordially:

"Where air you goin', sonny?"

"To the city," answered Dudley laconically.

"Ever been over there?"

"Never."

"I guess hit's some burg," said the wayfarer.

"You've never been there?" asked Dudley.

"Not yit," answered the stranger untruthfully.

"Do you know how far it is?"

"A feller back here a ways was a sayin' it was ten miles to the city limits, but forty miles to Broadway."

"Whew! Thirty miles from the city limits to Broadway! Some city!"

"Yes, and they say, too, look out fer pickpockets."

"Pickpockets?" questioned Dudley.

"Yep; they're as thick as 'skeeters' in the marsh lands in August."

"What do they do to a fellow?"

"Oh, they hold him up when he's a lookin' right square at 'em. I 'spect we'd better stay perty close together, pard, er they'll git both of us."

"In broad daylight?" asked Dudley.

"I'd say—and if you don't dig up, they'll make a cornmeal sieve out of you."

"Here's hoping that we don't meet any of them."

"I'm not afeered. You stay close to me, and I'll pilot you—I know the game," said the stranger.

"I thought you'd never been to New York."

"I hain't, but I've been in tougher places than New York."

"I'm just a farmer boy," said Dudley.

"That's what I thought. Now the main thing, sonny, is always to keep yer hand on yer pocketbook."

"I'll do that all right," replied Dudley unsuspectingly as he involuntarily placed his hand over his money.

"How much chink have you got?"

"Fifty-two dollars."

"Fifty-two dollars? Gee! we'll have to be keerful er they'll git that."

"Maybe I'd better put it in my shoes," said Dudley doubtfully.

"Whatever you think's best—kin you change a twenty fer me? I don't like to git big money changed in public places—some feller might be a watchin', you know."

"I can give you fives," answered Dudley accommodatingly as he fished his roll of greenbacks out of its mysterious hiding place.

After the change was properly and correctly made, the stranger cautiously observed:

"I 'spect we orten to try to work the city before mornin'."

"You know best," said Dudley.

"Well, it's almost night, now, and by the time we git a lunch, it'll be time to go to roost," said his companion.

"I've been working my way through, and by careful financing, I've saved some money."

"Let me tell you, it's perty tough sleddin' along here, pard—it's been 'worked' so much, you know."

"I dislike to break on my big money—I call it my reserve."

"That there's a good idear."

"But we'll have to have a lunch," reasoned Dudley.

"Never mind, I'll buy the lunch," answered the stranger.

"You're certainly a clever chap."

"What does that there pin mean what you've got on?"

"Oh, nothing."

"Then why are you a wearin' it? G. F."

"Oh, it's a pin that a bunch of us kids wore back home."

"It's made of—?"

"Just pieces of wire."

"G. F.—George the First. Grand Fishin'. Game Followers."

"Oh, you couldn't guess it in a hundred years, and I can't tell you, for it's a secret."

Here the conversation ended as the two entered a suburban restaurant where the stranger ordered ham and eggs and coffee for two. After they had eaten the lunch and quitted the eating place, Dudley enlogized:

"My! that was certainly a fine lunch; the best I've tasted since I left home."

"The best's none too good fer usans—we don't live but once."

"You have it figured just right."

"Say, pard, it's a gittin' dark already—let's find a hotel and put up fer the night. Do you ever drink, er gamble, er—"

"Never! and you'd better leave such people alone," interposed Dudley confidentially.

"You kin say what you please, stranger, but them sort of people have been the kindest folks in the world to me. They hain't never yit turned me away hungry, er throwed me out in the snow er the cold. They've never yit refused to give me an old coat, er a drink, er a kind word. They've certainly been a friend to me when I was clean down and out; and that's the time, I tell you, that a feller needs a friend."

"I'm a church member," said Dudley firmly.

"A church member! Heh! I'd rather go to hell with the gamblers and the saloon keepers and all the rest of their class than go to heaven with some of these here hard-shelled church members. Why, they'd want to charge you toll when you go stumblin' through the Pearly Gates. They wouldn't give you a drink of water if you was on fire and burnin' up."

"They're not all that way."

"Then the generous ones died before I was born. At least I've found 'em as skeerse as grasshoppers in hell. When a feller is a prosperin', he don't need no help; but when he a shiverin' with the cold and with hunger, then's when he needs a better feller than a church member."

"The central idea of the church is all right," argued Dudley.

"If it ever reaches the 'down-and-outers,' it's got to take off its coat and git acquainted and mix with the underworld. It'll not git contaminated, if it's all right to start with," said the other. "Say, I'm not goin' to spend fifty cents fer a bed in a hotel," he added.

"Nor me," said Dudley.

"Let's find a barn to sleep in—it's too cold tonight to sleep out in the open."

"Anything suits me."

Accordingly, after considerable hunting, they found an abandoned barn, into the loft of which these two unfortunates climbed and put up for the night. Dudley was more tired than usual, and immediately he was fast asleep. He did not awake until break of day. He, half asleep, accosted his friend:

"Hey! hey there!"

No response. He holloed louder:

"Say there! Where are you?"

No answer. He rubbed his eyes vigorously and looked about drowsily, but his friend did not seem to be there. Dudley arose and slowly descended into the alley. His friend was nowhere to be seen. Evidently he had moved on to other and more luxuriant pastures. He involuntarily felt for his money. It was gone. He pinched his arm to make sure that he was awake—perhaps he was dreaming and was walking in his sleep. He certainly was awake. Could it be possible that he had been duped? His friend was gone and his shackles were gone—the conclusion was inevitable; he had been "worked." He still was not satisfied, so he again searched the premises—his pal was nowhere to be found. He carefully

went through his pockets again—even the two dollars which his mother gave him were gone. Tears came into his eyes. He was heartbroken. He descended to the ground a third time, but there seemed to be no evidence which would at all indicate which way his friend had gone.

“He is a shark and a crook,” he muttered to himself, “I’m too confiding, too frank, too credulous, I guess. A wise man knows nothing, has nothing and says nothing.”

He made a last ascent to the barn loft with the faint, forlorn, unpromising hope that he might find some trace of his money. A large, dirty piece of cardboard attracted his attention. It was lying near the spot where he slept so serenely. Upon it was crudely scrawled:

“Maybe you can’t read my wrote,
But everybody rides the goat,
So why not Dudley?”

Dudley now knew that he had been duped. He had learned a valuable lesson, but it had cost him fifty-two dollars. He probably got value received, for now he never would forget it. Had it cost nothing he probably would not have remembered it. Finally he regretfully left the place of his undoing, but it was very much like leaving the grave of a very dear friend. However, with a heavy heart, he went plodding on toward the city of his dreams.

Soon he discovered that he was hungry, and that he was penniless. He had not felt as helpless since he left his grandfather’s home. There was nothing for him to do but beg. It makes a wonderful difference in one’s carriage and one’s spirit when he is begging with fifty-two dollars in his pocket and when he is begging without a cent at his command. All self-confidence had now been smothered out. His self-respect was gone. He regarded himself as no more than an ordinary tramp, for such he was, and he commenced to beg in the most unpromising and most unfruitful vineyard along his route. He finally secured three pieces of mush which a good housewife was in the act of throwing into the garbage can. Dudley ate one piece greedily and saved the other two for his dinner, lest fortune might not smile upon him when it was high noon. However, near noon he was awarded a job of wheeling in six tons of coal, for which he received one dollar and

fifty cents, but it took most of this to pay for his supper and lodging and breakfast. He muttered as he put the money out: "My! but it costs to live in a city." He was now going in fast company and he had to keep up appearances. After breakfast there were only fifty cents in the exchequer.

He was now intuitively afraid of the police who seemed to be everywhere and always watching. A score of times he had been directed to "move on," when he had stopped to see the street cars go by. He had never before seen a street car, and he was trying to discover the *modus operandi*. He was of the same opinion as the Chinaman, and he was just as full of wonder. He decided to board the next car, but he failed. He had waited on the wrong side of the street and naturally the motorman paid no attention to him. He saw his mistake when it was too late and assumed the position of a passenger in waiting on the opposite side of the street. He attempted to board the next car via the motorman's apartment, but he was rudely thrust out. Dudley was now nervous, if not excited, and attempted to enter the next car before the passengers had alighted, and the conductor almost jerked him in two. However, he finally got aboard, and was surprised as well as pleased to learn that he could ride twenty miles for five cents.

In a little while Dudley saw great throngs of hurrying people. He was sure that something terrible had happened. He had never before seen so many people and everybody was in a hurry. As the car advanced he saw in the distance the dim, misty, outlines of a great statue. Evidently it overlooked the bay, for it seemed to be used for long-distance lighting. The crowds of humanity grew denser, and the buildings gradually got higher. They made him dizzy when he attempted to count the number of stories. These skyscrapers reminded him of the cliff-dwellers of whom he had read so much in the books he had borrowed from Mr. McDuffy. The immensity, the vastness of things made him shudder. The bigness of things caused him to realize his own littleness and insignificance. And the crowds! Where were they going? Where did they come from? What a restless sea of humanity! What was their hurry? How cheap human life must be! A million human creatures could be swallowed up here and they would never be missed. He was fearful that he would lose his identity, that he never would be able to segregate himself

from this countless throng, that he would never see Waterloo again with its mud streets, its grimy windows, its kerosene lamps, and its wooden store buildings.

Many people were now detraining, and he concluded that he, too, should detrain; but upon inquiry, after he had alighted, he was informed that he was yet three miles from the Woolworth skyscraper. However he did not hesitate. He had no time to lose and at once commenced looking for a job. It had always been his boyish ambition to work in a printing office. Someway the roar, the thunder, the power, the determination, the massiveness of the big press appealed to his boyish fancy. So he systematically began asking, begging for a job at every printing office along his route, in his onward march toward the heart of the metropolis. But everywhere he was systematically turned down, and occasionally he was pointedly refused admittance. The proprietor of one printshop called him an anarchist, another a hobo, another a Bolshevik; but his only response was a smile. His patched and faded overalls, his cumbersome plow shoes, his ragged straw hat, and his long, unkempt hair failed to inspire confidence. Truly it was discouraging if not disheartening, but Dudley had been buffeted and kicked about so much that he did not now despair. He was a hardy plant and not a hothouse flower—he was inured to hardships, to the unkindness of human beings, to the rigors of the winters of life. Frequently he was maltreated and cruelly upbraided, but he ever remained cheerful, and hopeful, and courteous. It requires courage and patience and heroism to work day after day on a cloddy, clay, unproductive, hill-side farm under a semitropical sun; so, too, does it require courage and fortitude to withstand the taunts and gibes of an indifferent, selfish, unregenerate public.

Dudley truly resembled Si Plunkard and he knew it, but what could he do? Nothing, except push optimistically on, which he did eagerly and boldly and good-naturedly. Although everywhere he went, he received an emphatic "No!" still he moved persistently and hopefully on. The crowds now elbowed him, and bumped him and jostled him so rudely about that he longed for Waterloo and the freedom of the farm. He was already tired of the city. His dream of New York had proved a mirage. He was tired of seeing people and skyscrapers and street cars. And the noise was certainly dis-

concerting, distracting, nerve-wracking. But he was sure that he could endure all this, if he could only see his mother and Susan Bradstreet for a little while. How different the landscape would appear; how beautiful all creation would seem if he could only see Susan and his mother! Any place is home where your loved ones are, but no palace, nor castle can bring that peace and serene contentment, which every normal man craves, if his loved ones are not there.

IX

HUNTING A JOB

Finally it was evening and Dudley spent his last nickel for a loaf of bread, after which he wandered about the city with his eyes and ears wide open. However he must keep going—he too much resembled a vagrant. He dared not stop, policemen were everywhere. He soon came to a street whose refulgent illumination almost dazed him—it was “The Great White Way.” It, in some ways, corresponded with his idea of heaven, but he did not have time to contemplate or enjoy it—he must hurry on. He must find a place to sleep. Darkness was falling fast. He walked on and on—he knew not which way or whither. After a long while he came to countless ricks of lumber and long lines of box cars. Suddenly he heard the shrill whistle of several panting, puffing little tugs; then the deep, bellowing voices of great ocean liners, and he knew that he was near the sea. But he was so tired that these interested him little—so tired that he climbed into the first open box car that he came to and he was asleep almost instantly.

As usual Dudley awoke at break of day. He rubbed his eyes vigorously and wondered where he was; but it didn’t make any difference—he didn’t care very much. A cold indifference had crept into his heart and head during these last few weeks. He did not seem to care what happened or how soon; yet he did care. He had merely decided to take life as it came and let the cost be what it might.

Suddenly he heard someone snoring. He looked and saw the dim, sombre outlines of six burly tramps asleep in one end of the box car. They were as disreputable as pigs and were lying prone upon the floor in the dirt and the filth, and were certainly a sad eulogy upon the handiwork of their creator. Dudley tried to rise quietly and nimbly, but his foot had gone to sleep, and he would have fallen had he not caught hold of the noisy car door. In his efforts to keep from falling he made so much noise that he aroused the six sleeping lords

of questionable lineage. The sextette rubbed its eyes drowsily and vigorously and commenced swearing viciously. A big, burly fellow accosted Dudley wickedly:

"Damn you, who said you could sleep in my parlor?"

"I didn't know anyone was in here," answered Dudley good-naturedly.

"Then give me a dollar fer yer bed, damn you, and we'll let you go."

"I'm sorry, but I simply couldn't do it," said the boy.

"What's the trouble now? No lyin' goes."

"I haven't a cent."

"That's what they all say—come across er I'll give you a solar plexus."

"Search me—you can have all you find. A guy got fifty-two dollars out of my inside pocket last night and—"

"That's what you git fer bein' a capitalist; spend yer money, put it in circulation, git the good out of it, and you'll not git it stole," interposed the burly tramp.

Dudley replied mournfully:

"I never expect to have that much again."

"Who did you pick? Where did you git it?" asked the tramp.

"I worked for it."

"Now don't lie—we won't tell. I asked a skinny woman fer a cup of coffee yisterday mornin' and she jist shut the door in my face. Believe me I've got that there gal spotted, and she's a goin' to lose her pocket book tonight. I hain't a goin' to stand fer no sich impudence. I'm a gentleman, and I'm a-goin' to be treated like a gentleman."

"Where's your plug hat and stand-up collar and poodle dog?" laughed Dudley.

"Damn sich gentlemen! Say, I'm hungry—somebody's got to buy me a beefsteak this mornin', er I'll clean up on somebody," bellowed the big fellow as he yawned uncouthly, and lazily arose, after which he slothfully brushed the dirt off of his badly used trousers.

"Why don't you git out and work fer your livin' like I do? That's the way I got my start," bantered one of the big fellow's chums.

"I hain't a goin' to work fer nobody; I hain't nobody's flunkey. I'm so weakly that work and I don't agree. This

here world owes me a livin' and hit's got to pay," said the big tramp.

"You'd work before you'd starve, wouldn't you, pard?" laughed the pal.

"Damn you, I'd fight, I'd steal, I'd kill before I'd work."

"Do you mean it?"

"Mean it? Hain't this a free country? Can't a feller do jist as he pleases? You're mighty right, I mean it. Say! I'm a-needin' some breakfast, and I'm a-goin' to have it, er the world's a-goin' to come to an end," and he spat noisily.

"Yes, and you'll git—"

"I hain't a-keerin' what I git. Winter's a comin' on, and what I'm a-lookin' fer is free board and a furnace-hot room."

"You'd better watch out er that's exactly what you'll git, but there'll be bars in front of the windows."

"That's prezactly what I want; and that's good enough fer any hobo. What do you want, Jocko?"

"A bank account's good enough fer me."

"Heh! The bankers would gobble that all up before mornin'. They're jist like a flock of robins in a cherry tree."

"Oh, the government wouldn't stand fer nothin' like that, Tim."

"Damn the government."

"Why?"

"Why, the government hain't honest—nobody's honest."

"Do you reckon so?"

"Sure I reckon so. I'd like to blow the whole country up. We don't want no government; we don't want no flag, except a red one."

"I guess yer right—what we want is freedom to do as we dinged please."

"Sure, that's what we want. Hurrah for the Bolsheviki! Down with the President! Up with 'Emmie' Goldman! Hurrah fer 'Emmie' Goldman. I say, hurrah!"

"You'd better shut up."

"I'm not afeered of nobody."

"No doubt you're a wantin' to be 'run in.'"

"Sure I am fer three er four months. I do somethin' every fall to git run in. I tell you steam heat and hot meals don't go bad when it's a-snowin' and a-blowin' icebergs outside. But last year I had a hard time a gittin' put in. I stole a couple loaves of bread, and the old jedge let me go on 'crowbation,'

I believe that's what he called it. Then I stole some bananas from a dago fruit peddler, but the officers don't like dagos any better than an angel likes devilsfood, and they wouldn't arrest me. So I grabbed a fat, sassy woman's pocket book, and run right square into a policeman. The fat woman was right after me a-hollerin' like a Swiss yodler. To make sure of gittin' arrested this time, I opened the pocket book while I was runnin' and it had jist six cents in it. Of course I got four months fer stealin' six cents, jist what I wanted. You bet I lived jist like a king durin' them there four months."

Suddenly a fellow in the opposite end of the car was awakened by the noise of Tim's windstorm, and he unexpectedly confronted the row of tramps. He wore a white collar, tan shoes, a sack coat and a derby hat. He had crawled into the box car after the six tramps had retired, but before Dudley had put up for the night. The big, burly tramp started toward the white-collared fellow viciously. The latter set his teeth, clenched his fists, and showed fight. The big tramp with a menacing, domineering look, commanded officiously:

"Damn you, turn over yer money. Yer money, I say! Turn it over now!"

"I don't have to."

"Who said you could sleep in my summer kitchen? Who invited you?"

"None of your business, I tell you."

"Tain't? Did you say it tain't?"

"You go straight to—"

At this juncture the big fellow swung viciously at the newcomer's head, but he missed him, after which the entire gang of tramps ferociously attacked the stranger from all sides. Dudley had been merely an interested spectator of all that had gone before, but he did not wish to be a witness of what was about to follow. He had remained near the door of the car playing the role of a good listener which is generally a very difficult role to play. But he now decided that it was time to go. He did not wish to be a party to a tragedy, neither did he wish to be implicated in any way, so he slipped out the car door, landed on his feet and ran; but he heard someone yell "Help! Help!" when he was some fifty feet distant. He presumed that it was the white-collared fellow, for he regarded his life as in most imminent danger. Dudley hastened, he did not wish to be implicated. Sometimes, you

know, the innocent are proved guilty and have to suffer for the crimes of the wicked.

Finally Dudley reached the wharf. He seated himself near the water's edge and eagerly watched the officious little tugs as they sailed and darted hither and thither as dexterously as barn swallows. All of this was amusing to the boy who enjoyed the antics of these little boats immensely.

Soon an hour had passed. Suddenly he felt an internal craving. It was the gnawing of hunger, and he had no money. Time, too, was precious—he must have food. He must find a job. In truth his conscience now cudgeled his judgment for wasting these hours unnecessarily. It was now almost nine o'clock. He hurried away, realizing more and more that appearances were against him. In fact people gazed at him steadfastly as he approached, and an amused smile usually lighted their countenances as they passed. He decided that, after all, Robert was right; that clothes make the man; that clothes are a man's passport when he is among strangers. But what could he do? He had no money, no friends, no credit—he was helpless.

Finally Dudley came to an immense printing establishment. The big press was running as smoothly as the babbling brook, except that its rumble sounded like the roar of Niagara. It was, too, almost human in its activities. It did everything but think. Dudley could see it from an alley window. The latent power in this piece of complex machinery aroused Dudley's boyish ambition anew. He went to the front door of the establishment and entered, boldly at first, and then he advanced with diffidence. Here "The Knickerbocker" was printed. It was an international newspaper and had a large circulation and a larger influence. After Dudley was inside the building his eyes danced with surprise and excitement. The interior was almost regal in its furnishings and its decorations. Its office apartments were on each side of a central aisle, with a private room to the rear of each office. All was finished in genuine mahogany, and the furniture was upholstered in genuine leather. The walls were pretentiously frescoed, Grecian gods and goddesses were prominent everywhere; the building and its furnishings bespoke wealth and affluence, all of which Dudley was not accustomed to.

His heart fluttered as he glanced about and found himself in the presence of so many signs of opulence. He was plainly

abashed; he had never seen anything like it. Scores of well-dressed ladies and well-groomed gentlemen were rudely gazing at him from every angle. He was now plainly disturbed. He could not but glance at his own disreputable clothes, tattered and worn, ragged and torn, and feel chagrined. Dudley noticed the white enameled name-plates, which, like Poe's "Raven," perched themselves above each office window. Evidently, he concluded, they marked the various bureaus or departments that were necessary to the successful publication of a metropolitan daily. Far back he saw a name-plate which read, "Charles Conkling, Publisher." He decided that Mr. Conkling was the gentleman he wished to see. So he deliberately approached his office window. All the while Dudley's audience was watching him intently. Smiles of ridicule flitted across the countenances of these much interested spectators, as they regarded this "Si Plunkard" from the West with the keenest interest.

Mr. Conkling was a man with extraordinary business acumen. He was of medium stature and had piercing brown eyes. He was perhaps fifty, was a prince in appearance, was well and correctly groomed, was clean shaven, had brown hair streaked with grey, and was an intelligent, considerate, self-made, hard-working newspaper man.

Mr. Conkling regarded Dudley with more than passing interest as the farmer boy diffidently stood at his office window with inquiring eyes. Dudley's countenance was innocent although it was sadly in need of a barber and the dry cleaner. His tattered straw hat he held bashfully in his hand as he alternately and nervously threw his weight on one foot and then on the other. His head of hair resembled a shock of bearded wheat, and his clothes! They were disreputable. Mr. Conkling's facial expression betrayed his surprise, but in a moment he regained his usual composure and queried:

"What can I do for you, young man?"

"If you please, sir, I am not a tramp, but I'm hungry. I've had no breakfast. I'm not begging—all I ask is a chance—a chance to make good, a chance to earn some money."

"Where are you from?"

"South-eastern Ohio, sir. I have a good mother, but my father and I could not agree. He wouldn't pay me for the

work I did on the farm, even though I did more work than anybody he could get."

"Are you an anarchist?"

"I believe firmly in law and order."

"But really don't you feel that the rich are imposing upon the poor? Don't you think the rich have tied a millstone about the neck of the poor? Shouldn't there be a redistribution of wealth? It seems to me that the poor man is really not getting a square deal. I should say that there rightfully should be a redivision of all the wealth of the world, so that every living man would have a fair and an equal chance—what do you say?"

"If there were a redistribution of the wealth of the world today, we would not be equal tomorrow. I pronounce the rich man a boon and a blessing to society. Really, I don't know what would become of the poor man if it were not for the rich man."

"But it does seem that no one ought to starve in this land of plenty; it does seem that everybody is entitled to a big, fat salary, that he might have all the necessities and many of the luxuries of life. Something must be wrong. It must be the rich man's fault—who else could be to blame?" asked Mr. Conkling.

"Poverty, according to my way of thinking, is largely the fault of the parents. Marriage laws are too lax. Children should not be brought into the world when there's no chance for them," answered Dudley.

"Many great men were born poor," said the publisher.

"Yes, in an earlier day, but not recently. Times have changed. A man must be educated today if he wishes to compete. What chance does a laboring man have to improve his intellect if it is a struggle to make enough money to buy bread to feed his hungry children?"

"But this is a free country," insisted the publisher.

"Yes, it is a free country—free so long as you do not abridge the freedom of someone else," said Dudley.

"I guess you're not a Bolshevik."

"No, I am not, Mr. Conkling, but I'm a boy who hasn't had a chance."

"What do you wish to do?"

"Work," stated the boy simply.

"Do you wish to be general manager of 'The Knickerbocker'?"

"Not at all—not so ambitious as that. I like books. I have an intense yearning to know and to learn, but my father pronounces education a curse, and he would not permit me to buy any books."

"What sort of a job, then, do you want?"

"Any kind, Mr. Conkling. I belong to no union. I merely wish an opportunity to 'make good,' an opportunity to prove to you that I'm worthy and dependable."

"But those clothes! They certainly do not speak loudly in your favor."

"But what better could you expect of a young man whose father gave him nothing better to wear than his own cast-off clothing?"

"He bought you a new Sunday suit each spring and fall."

"I can't remember of ever getting a new suit of clothes; I've always worn my father's overalls."

"Your father must be stingy."

"Pardon me, but he's too stingy to make money."

"That frequently is the case."

"I'm going to make good, Mr. Conkling—I believe Conkling is your name."

"Yes, my boy, you have it right."

"I'm going to try to make something out of myself, and I will succeed if determination and intelligence ever win."

"I've been buncoed so many times—"

"Don't 'turn me down,' Mr. Conkling—give a boy a chance."

"I guess every boy is entitled to that," answered Mr. Conkling meditatively.

"I'll not betray your confidence—try me just ten days."

"But those clothes! those clothes! Your countenance is inviting and full of promise, but those clothes!" replied Mr. Conkling with a 'get-thee-behind-me' gesture.

"Mr. Conkling, clothes are only the whitewash on the fence, the paint on the barn, the peeling on the apple."

"True; but whitewash frequently sells a piece of property, paint often sells an automobile, the peeling on the apple always helps you to decide which one you will take."

"Yes, but you frequently get fooled when you allow appearances to sway your judgment," insisted the boy.

"Very true; nevertheless such is the standard that the

world uses, and we must in a measure 'do what Tildy does.'" Mr. Conkling hesitated for a moment. The tone of his voice indicated that he had something more to say. Soon he continued: "I'd have to be severe with you."

"I don't care how severe you are."

"How much pay would you want?"

"Whatsoever you see fit to give me."

"I might give you only four dollars a week."

"I would be content, if you should say that that was all I was worth."

"You couldn't rent a room for three times four dollars."

"Probably not, but I could sleep upon a cot in the boiler room, if you would permit it."

"But four dollars wouldn't pay your cheese and cracker bill."

"I beg your pardon, but I'd save two dollars each week."

"I'm a great believer in discipline: I'd much rather start a boy at four dollars a week and raise him to fifteen than start him at fifteen and reduce him to four. He would not only be in a much better frame of mind, but his ambitions, his aspirations and his hopes would be in the ascendant, and his words, his walk, his spirit would be charged with buoyancy and animation."

"I agree," said Dudley.

"I'm going to try you out, but the first impertinence, the first neglect of duty, the first dishonest move, and you are ousted without ceremony. If you 'make good' I'll promote you; if you don't, I'll fire you."

"Fair enough!"

"Your duties for the present will be those of janitor. Go to the basement and tell the fellow in charge down there that I've promoted him; tell him to show you everything relative to the firing of the boilers, after which he will please report at my office."

"Thank you, Mr. Conkling; I certainly thank you."

Charles Conkling turned quickly in his big armchair, dismissed the disreputably dressed farmer boy from his mind, and gave his attention to the many pressing matters that are always awaiting the attention of an editor of a great metropolitan newspaper.

X

A GAME OF FOOTBALL

Grace Conkling, daughter of Charles Conkling, editor of "The Knickerbocker," one of the more influential papers of New York City, attended school at Belmont. She was a charming young lady of perhaps nineteen, and, like Maude Muller, was the picture of health and contentment. Her eyes were brown, her complexion fair, her cheeks full, her stature medium, her form plump, but not stout. She was genial and animated in conversation, vivacious and caustic in repartee, queenly and commanding in carriage.

It was Saturday and the annual class scrap was a matter of history. The bruised noses had, in a large measure, forgotten their soreness; the smashed hats and shredded clothing had been replaced with new outfits; the wounded feelings and bleeding sensibilities had been poulticed with conciliatory explanations and profuse regrets.

A football game now was on. It was between Belmont and Blair. The University of Belmont was early astir on this serene Saturday morning with enthusiasm and eagerness. Like all college towns, Belmont was a cemetery when the students were gone, but when the smiling young hopefuls returned, it at once blossomed into buoyant and vigorous life. The approaching game even stirred the townspeople with fervent expectancy, while the effervescing student body resembled an over-bubbling spring. The football game was the universal topic of conversation. "Rah, rah, rah! Rah, rah, rah! Belmont!" resounded from everywhere. It was shouted from the house-tops, from the hill-tops, from the tree-tops. Robert Tadmire was Belmont's athletic wonder. He was the star half-back of the 'varsity eleven. He was the hope and the inspiration of the college, athletically. Whensoever he appeared upon the gridiron he was greeted with cheers of prolonged enthusiasm, and ovation after ovation was meted out to him.

Everybody worships a hero or heroine. Robert Tadmire possessed a fine physique, built for endurance and agility.

Whenever he started with the ball, he went—he was the paradoxical irresistible force. The opposition could not hold him, neither could it stop him. Naturally, when Belmont was winning, the rooters cheered lustily, but it was when Tadmores started with the ball that bedlam broke loose. Once he kicked the ball from about the fifty-yard line, and the spectators simply went feverishly mad as they saw the ball soar many feet in the air like some strange, uncanny bird of prey and drop midway between the two goal posts. A mighty shout not unlike a thousand thunders went up. Pandemonium reigned. The student body became a howling, surging mob. They rushed upon the gridiron en masse and carried young Tadmores back to Belmont's side upon their shoulders. The ladies in the amphitheater quickly and tactfully changed the college yell to "Rah, rah, rah! Rah, rah, rah, Tadmores!" Even the grouchy, crusty, anaemic professors forgot their customary dignity and yelled like school boys playing tallyho.

Grace Conkling too was there. She roomed at the ladies' dormitory, and ate in the commodious dining-room immediately below. She and Robert Tadmores dined and chatted at the same table. They were very good friends. At their table only the socially select were admitted, and woe be unto that luckless outsider who unwittingly presumed so much as to seat himself at this table uninvited—this table of beauty and social exclusiveness.

Naturally, Grace's enthusiasm and admiration now were boundless. She could scarcely contain herself. The tides of hilariousness had reached the flood stage. She shouted and holloaed and marched to and fro waving her 'kerchief frantically if not hysterically. She was accompanied and aided and abetted in her jollification by a full half dozen congenial feminine friends, each of whom was singing with vigor.

Blair had been long since fully advised that Robert Tadmores was the star player of the Belmont team, and Blair had already decided, at the first opportunity, to hurt him, to cripple him, to put him out of the game. So the Blair players were now bumping Mr. Tadmores with all their might. They sat upon him, they fell upon him, they piled upon him, they jumped upon him; but he seemed to possess a charmed life. Three big Blair athletes guarded him constantly, while the rest of the visiting team an-

noyed him, pounced upon him and interfered with his plays; but Robert still played on. Such is dirty athletics; such are the enemies of clean sports; such is depraved human nature when it tries to kill off a good player for the mere sake of winning a game.

Finally the battle was over. Fortunately Robert Tadmores escaped injury. Belmont beat its competitor by the clean-cut score of thirty-two to nothing. The entire city of Belmont celebrated. Even the college professors were jubilant. Their sickly grins reminded one of a bevy of school girls who have reached that giggling, simpering stage in life when love is paramount.

Mr. Tadmores as a student was very poor; he was unsatisfactory, but there was no danger of his flunking—he was the lion of the hour. A student's athletic record can cover a multitude of flunks. Undeniably Robert would now graduate with honors. There was no alternative. The exigencies of the situation demanded it; college public opinion demanded it; and, after all, public opinion eventually sits upon the throne and rules the world.

He was carried from the gridiron upon the shoulders of four stalwart athletic enthusiasts. The student body and the faculty fell in line behind their hero, and the entire aggregation started townward yelling like a bunch of Apache braves starting upon the warpath. "Rah, rah, rah! Rah, rah, rah, Belmont," split the air with its piercing shrillness and boundless vigor. The accent and emphasis were placed upon the third and sixth "rahs" and "Belmont." The other words were spoken quick and short.

Mr. Tadmores's bump of egotism had now swollen to the size of an unhulled walnut. He was forced to the conclusion that he really was a superior creature. The ladies lavished their most genial smiles upon him, and his masculine friends made him glad with their eulogies and words of good cheer.

The procession marched about the city for more than an hour, stopping at the ladies' dormitory, the president's home, the various fraternity houses and all other places of college importance. Every stop demanded time: it required a speech, a special ovation, the college yell, and the breeziest fraternity songs. During all this Robert was naturally sprayed with the atomizer of praise, and perfumed with the heliotrope of love, and he enjoyed it immensely. Some people think this

is great stuff. They like it supremely and it seems to nourish them, but after all it is moonshine, foam, blue sky, slippery-elm bark.

When Grace Conkling reached her room that evening she was very tired, but her enthusiasm was bubbling. She eulogized as follows, addressing her room mate, Helen Hunt:

"Robert Tadmire is certainly a wonder. He is the perfect man. He is the marvel of the ages."

"Yes, Grace, he's a typical American boy. He's always on his toes ready to go forward. He's aggressive, he's fearless, he's a physical marvel," answered Helen who was the daughter of a jeweler and lived directly across the street from Grace in New York.

"He'll make a great man—mind what I tell you: he'll make a great man."

"Yes, he's undeniably a live wire," said Helen.

"That's the sort of a fellow I'm angling for," declared Grace.

"I certainly believe in Robert Tadmire."

"And he's sociable, too; but he's not a snob—I hate a snob."

"So do I," said Helen.

"Besides he's a fine looker and a swell dresser," added Grace.

"Do you suppose he wears a corset?" whispered Helen.

"Oh, I don't think so," said Grace.

"He's almost feminine in his dress, and—"

"No, he isn't either, Helen. Why, what makes you say such awful things about Robert? He's a four-square man, a man with initiative and aggressiveness; but he also has taste and style and the most charming ways in the world."

"He's the most delightful fellow in college. He's strictly up to date on what to do and when to do it," answered Helen, hedging.

"I agree, Helen."

"I imagine that his wardrobe is easily worth five thousand."

"Oh, Helen! isn't he a swell fellow? I just love him with all my heart," confessed Grace with a giggle and a twitter.

"So serious as all that?" mischievously and charmingly queried Helen who was tall and lithe and willowy and had keen, piercing, brown eyes.

"I wish he were going to be at the club tonight—we'd certainly celebrate, wouldn't we?" asked Grace.

"Indeed we would."

"We'd make him the guest of honor, wouldn't we?"

"He's always that."

"Right you are, Helen; but our club is a tame affair when our 'Robin's not here.'"

"But he'll be back—the football season will soon be over."

"If he'd only come tonight, I'd be so happy," sighed Grace.

"He'll come very soon. They're feeding our Robert on rare beef and limberger down there where football players are coddled and tuned and shaped and tutored."

"They say that cigarettes and chocolates and pie and cake are tabooed."

"Tabooed? No cigarettes? How awful! Tame old world! Poor Robert!" explained Helen.

"It's certainly a strenuous life that these football players lead that they may earn a little 'varsity glory; especially when a slip or a fumble loses the poor fellow everything excepting the jibes and taunts of a thankless student body."

"Thank goodness! it's only three more weeks until the football season closes, then our Robert will come back to us all covered with glory," said Helen.

"How delightful his presence will be, with all its breezy freshness, all his good-natured vivacity, and all his stylish up-to-dateness," Grace said pensively.

"Well, it's supper time—I'll bet you it will be hash, or creamed beef or rice."

"Then you can guess it in three guesses?" asked Grace.

"Always, and sometimes in one," said Helen.

"Well, let's go down and take our 'medi.'"

"Oh, let's stay in our room, and resurrect the chafing dish and have some tomato bouillon all by our 'lones.'"

"Agreed! Capital!" said Grace.

So these two daughters of wealth and beauty remained in their room, and, like the bachelor smoking a round of cigars in his den, dreamed and chatted the evening away.

XI

THE ACID TEST

It was now three days since Dudley Longden commenced working at his job as janitor at "The Knickerbocker" offices. He was undergoing the acid test of ridicule. He was still wearing the red bandana about his neck, and, naturally, it provoked a smile and a chuckle wherever he went. Too, he was still wearing the patched blue overalls and the faded waistcoat that he had on when he tearfully bid his good mother goodby. He had, however, on the second evening washed them and hung them by the furnace to dry while he slept, but he had used too much lye and had faded them to that horrible yellow color that completely paralyzes the æsthetic nature. In fact he was pronounced a rare bird with rare plumage—probably a kingfisher.

It was now morning of the third day. Dudley had just emerged from the basement to ascertain the warmth of the room and the radiators, when a pert young lad who was one of the under-secretaries shouted in a loud voice to Anna Bland, an understudy in the mailing department and a daughter of a walking delegate of the Printer's Union, saying:

"Oh, Anna!

"'If a body meet a body comin' through the rye,
If a body kiss a body, would a body cry?'"

Naturally every employee in "The Knickerbocker" offices heard the taunt and chuckled infectiously. The pompous young fellow followed up this first success with:

"Come one, come all, come this way. The latest freak from the wilds of Ohio has just come to town."

Anna laughed boisterously and replied arrogantly:

"No, no, Bill, you have it wrong: it's our friend Si Plunkard that has just come to town."

Dudley looked about innocently, colored perceptibly, felt the poisoned sting of this barbed sarcasm, but said nothing.

Mr. Conkling was listening, however, and these biting thrusts, these envenomed arrows grated painfully upon his sense of justice and fair play. Presumably, he was busily engaged; in truth he was listening attentively and he had heard. He quickly took up his pen and wrote:

"No gentleman laughs at the dress, the mistakes, or the misfortunes of another. Instead, he should be profoundly grateful to his Creator that he has been dealt with so considerately and so charitably."

He forthwith ordered this gentle, but pointed rebuke printed upon small pieces of cardboard, one of which was placed upon the desk of each employee. The refined and courteous took the rebuke seriously, but the supercilious and discourteous smiled rudely and inconsiderately.

Momentarily, two newsboys came bolting through one of the rear doors of the printshop in quest of a drink. They came suddenly upon Dudley for the first time. They stopped and deliberately looked him over, gazing at him rudely and with eyes full of wonder. Astonishment beamed from their mischievous eyes. The freckle-faced, red-headed lad shouted to the job printer:

"Where did you git it, Tim?"

Tim smiled knowingly. The red-headed boy continued:

"Black him up, Tim, and that lad 'll make a crackin' good 'end man'."

Tim smiled broadly, but said nothing.

"Now, Red, look him over keerfully—that's certainly a swell outfit he's got on; I'll bet that's the latest," asserted Brownie confidentially and mock-seriously.

"Brownie" was a brown-headed, brown-eyed lad who was Red's inseparable pal in times of peace and times of war.

"Let's git him sheared, Brownie. I'll contribute liberally—here's my 'nick' right now."

"Just as well have him shod, too. Them there shoes hain't fit fer no thoroughbred."

"Looky! Jist looky at that there wire pin he wears—G. F., Great Flimmer. I'll bet that's right, too."

"But gee! how kin he afford it? That there pin cost somethin'."

Ingratitude and ridicule are the two heaviest crosses that mortal man is called upon to bear. Dudley had thus far resolutely borne them both without a murmur. He bravely con-

tinued his work as if nothing were happening. Constitutionally, he was super-sensitive, so naturally his heart was bleeding. How he longed for his sweet-spirited mother who was dearer to him than silver or gold. How he longed for his vivacious sweetheart who to him was sweeter than the honey or the honeycomb.

The two lads had now got a drink, but they were not satisfied. They were itching for more fun at Dudley's expense. The red-headed youngster boldly addressed him:

"Well, pard, take keer of yerself and don't work too hard."

"And take good keer of that there red bandaner—it would be a shame to git that spiled," shouted Brownie in a loud voice.

"Don't forgit to go to Sunday School next Sunday—mama 'll spank."

"I wonder if he'd let me chaw his gum a leetle while."

"Nothin' doin'—it's too good."

"I bet that feller has been to the county fair where you git all the pink lemonade you kin drink fer a nickel."

"And the gals! Oh, them gals! My, my! Rosebuds! Mornin' glories! Dew drops! Chocolate drops! Yum, Yum!"

"Maybe he'd take us kids along sometime."

"To help ketch the greased pig?"

"Yes, and see the big pumpkins."

"All right, pard, thanks awfully fer the invitation. Yes, we'll go, but don't forgit to git us two sugar-coated gals, one brown-headed and one red-headed. Won't that be delightful?"

"But, say! boy! You must git dolled up with a new bandaner, and you must put two coats of stove blacking on them there shoes."

"All right; then we're all fixed. That's just fine. Goodby."

Thus these two thorns in the flesh quitted the printshop, leaving their sarcasm to rankle in Dudley's sensitive breast after they were far away. It was painful but some things have to be endured.

Although Dudley's feelings were very susceptible, although he was undeniably over self-conscious, still his judgment had been slow in maturing. Men flower later in life than women, and some men mature more slowly and much later than others.

One of the linotype operators felt sorry for Dudley and followed him to the furnace room, where he addressed him as follows:

"Son, let me tell you something."

"Certainly," replied Dudley courteously.

"Your clothes make everybody laugh. People are ridiculing you."

"I know it, but I have no money."

"I trust you didn't come to New York City without any money."

"My father is miserly. He offered me no money when I started, and I was too proud to ask him."

"I don't blame you for quitting him."

"But I have a good mother; yes, I have the best mother that ever lived," explained Dudley earnestly as tears welled up into his blue eyes.

"I have some clothes at home; they're nothing to brag on, but they're better than those you have on."

"I will pay you—I'm no bum. I've been a hard-working boy, but God knows that I've tried to do what was right."

"There'll be no charges, Dudley. They're castaway clothes and a little ragged, but they're better than those you have on."

"I'll certainly appreciate your kindness."

"I think my clothes will just about fit you—we're about the same size, I guess."

"I'm going to buy me some togs as soon as I earn a little money."

"Dudley, you must remember that in a city like this, you're judged entirely by your appearance, by the clothes you wear."

"I presume strangers have no other way of judging a person, but it seems to me that that sort of yardstick isn't exactly accurate."

"Probably not, nevertheless the ordinary person judges your prosperity, your financial standing, your intelligence, your ability to make good, and even your morals by your personal appearance, and you can't change him."

"Now, out my way, out in Ohio, we don't give dress the consideration that you do here in New York. I notice that all New Yorkers wear the same sort of hat, the same tan oxfords, the same style of collar, the same knit tie—you people remind me of a herd of Holsteins. You're all the same; you have no individuality. Now in my state we're more independent; we're not the ardent votaries of style and fashion that you are here, and I trust we shall always maintain our independence."

"Anyway, Dudley, you can't change New York—its habits are fixed."

"I know it and I'm not going to try to change it."

"Tonight, Dudley, I'll have mother patch all the bad places in one of my suits, and then, I believe, you'll not be ashamed of them."

"If you want any errands run, or any work done any time after hours, remember that the job's mine. I want to pay for everything I get. I'm no sponge."

"You seem to be an appreciative sort of a chap, Dudley, and that makes me like you."

"Say, tell me one thing: are all 'The Knickerbocker' employees wealthy?"

"By no means."

"They all wear fine clothes, and I naturally presumed they were all very rich."

"Not at all, Dudley. Don't you know that the great majority of people would rather be dead than out of style?"

"But how can they afford it?"

"The American people can afford anything."

"But how?"

"Don't you know, Dudley, that they will mortgage their homes, that they'll mortgage their furniture, that they'll mortgage their lives that they may buy swell clothes, give big dinner parties, and drive a flashy automobile?"

"Surely not."

"Why seventy-five per cent of the salaried class of New York City is in the clutches of the chattel loan sharks."

"I would not have imagined that such a thing could be true."

"I'll say that ninety per cent of the world is struggling—struggling with its head just above the financial waters in its mad effort to keep up appearances, in its mad effort to entertain prodigally and live regally."

"I'd rather wear these old clothes and save some money than be in that class."

"I believe you're wrong. People would snub you and ridicule you and refuse to associate with you, if you attempted anything of that kind."

"That's the way they do in New York?"

"Yes, and the villages, too; and I tell you another thing,

Dudley: you're employer 'll dismiss you after a while, if you don't spruce up and dress respectably."

"Dear old Ohio! How I cherish thy fair name! Any man is a fool to mortgage his home to buy an automobile."

"They say one is born every moment."

"But I guess that's none of my business. All I've got to do is to make good. As soon as I get some decent clothes I'm going to attend night school, and if you'll show me how to operate your linotype machine, I'll do some of your work for you after supper."

"But the union!"

"The union will never know, and I'll never tell."

Dudley's friend studied for a moment and then he answered:

"I'll just do that, Dudley. I can show you of evenings when no one is around."

"Certainly you can."

"By the way, you're wearing a peculiar pin."

"Oh, it's nothing—nothing but a home-made affair. The members of a society of young people at home wear it because they think it's smart."

"What does it stand for?"

"Patriotism, home and native land."

"That's saying a great deal, but just what do you mean?"

"I'll explain more at length some day; it's just a little foolishness of a bunch of kids."

Here the conversation closed. It was quitting time. Everything about the printshop was controlled by unions, and quite naturally when the clock struck five, everything stopped, and it now was five. Typewriters died in the middle of a sentence, linotype machines pitched their tents in the middle of a word, half-finished editorials peacefully rested until the morrow, display "ads" were left partly blocked; in fact, every kind of work had now given away to chatter and the noise of the scores of departing employees.

Mr. Robins hastily started upstairs, but he suddenly turned and said:

"Dudley, I'll see you in the morning—it's quitting time now. It is five o'clock, and everything stops, you know, at five."

"Can I do anything for you tonight?"

"You can oil and clean my machine thoroughly."

"I certainly will."

Thus the conversation ended. Soon everyone had left the

building except Dudley who was eating his unpretentious lunch of cheese and crackers, and Mr. Conkling who was writing his daughter, Grace, as follows:

"Dear daughter:

I was delighted when I read that Belmont had beaten Blair at football. Hurrah for Belmont! Three cheers! That fellow, Tadmor, must be a two-thousand volt, high-tension motor. Yes, he must be a magnificent specimen of physical manhood.

I employed a new janitor some four days since. He is from the country. His appearance is against him, but I employed him through sympathy. He really has nothing to recommend him save his poverty and an honest eye. All the other employees are making sport of him, but the chap has never had a chance. His clothes are a joke; his straw hat resembles the one that 'Puppy' played with in the kennel last summer; his hair—I mean the boy's hair—is long and unkempt; he wears a large, red bandana around his neck day and night—oh, I admit that he's a picture for "Puck," but he only asks four dollars a week, and he assures me that he will save two of that. They say that a chrysanthemum is no more than a daisy plus a certain amount of culture, but it remains to be seen whether this chap is a daisy or a stalk of dogfennel.

Goodby, with love, from
Father."

"P. S. I just employed Susan Bradstreet, our new janitor's sweetheart. She too is fresh from the sterile hills of Ohio. I may need your sympathy."

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Susan had indeed come to the city and Dudley spent many hours with his country love. In fact, they breakfasted together and lunched together and left the building together every night.

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More than a year had elapsed since Robert Tadmor left his fair, young bride wistfully standing near the immense boulder on the mountain side. She had eagerly watched his

disappearing form until he was gone. It was then that she completely "broke down" and sobbed convulsively.

Each morning at dawn and each evening at dusk, since that memorable day, in wintry storms and the rejuvenating sunshine of summer, Julia Nansen had gone down to the boulder near the brink of the mountain stream to await and to welcome her indifferent husband. Here, on the boulder, she often sat for hours with her babe in her arms, either weirdly humming some disconnected love tune, or holding silent communion with the past. To her this boulder was a sacred spot. It was hallowed ground all around about. Here she daily consecrated her life anew to one whom she loved more than life itself. It was here that she last saw him without whom life was a bleak, lonesome, desolate trail.

She was now sitting upon the boulder. She stopped and looked tenderly at her babe, looked tenderly into the innocent eyes of her babe, and said:

"Baby dear, say 'papa.' You kin say 'papa,' can't you? But where is papa? Your dear papa? If papa only knew how lonesome we were, he'd hurry back, hurry right back, wouldn't he, dear?"

"The hicker' nuts are fallin'—I found one yisterday. Papa said he'd come back before the hicker' nuts fell, but they fell last year and papa did not come. They are now falling again and dear papa has not come. But papa will come, baby dear, because he said he would, and papa is good and noble and true. How nice it is to have such a good, such a noble, such a true papa!"

XII

DISAPPOINTMENTS

Grace and Robert were quietly resting. Dinner was over and they were enjoying not a siesta, but a few moments of recuperation. They were seated in commodious, tapestried rockers in the parlor of the ladies' dormitory conversing, but somehow the conversation was dragging. Grace suddenly became morose and uncommunicative. Robert tried repeatedly, but unsuccessfully, to interest her, and finally he queried petulantly:

"What in the world is the matter with you, Grace?"

"Nothing," replied Grace laconically.

"You may be telling the truth, but I doubt—"

"Well, if you must know, I'm worried, simply worried to death about papa."

"How's that?"

"Aren't you a little inquisitive?"

"I don't wish to be. I have no desire to interpose in family affairs, but I thought I might be able to assist you, Grace."

"As I said, it's papa Conkling—he's about to drive me to drink."

"Don't permit him to do it, refreshments are expensive now—yes, I say, they're scarce, and a fellow takes chances."

"Anyway, papa has not only allowed that green janitor of ours to bring his girl to New York, but he has employed her."

"Where does your 'green' janitor hail from?"

"Some place in Ohio."

"Then you be mighty 'keerful' what you say, for your humble servant is a buckeye," admonished Robert mock-seriously.

Grace smiled as she answered:

"If our janitor is a fair sample of the buckeyes that grow in your state, I pity Ohio."

"You've personally seen and talked with your janitor?"

"Yes, I met the distinguished gentleman just before I returned from the Christmas holidays."

"And he was impressive? Profound?"

"Very. Really he's the greenest pumpkin that I ever talked to."

"Then you're in the habit of talking to the pumpkins?"

"The one I'm talking to now and the janitor are the only ones."

"Then Ohio pumpkins are especially favored, it seems."

"Oh, not any more than the Ohio gourd and toad-stool families."

"Now, you be keerful; remember that 'us-uns' from Ohio hain't a-goin' to stand for everything at the hands of 'you-uns' from New York."

"Our janitor's name is Longden—I've been trying to think of it all evening. Yes, Dudley Longden is his name."

"Dudley Longden?"

"That's his name all right."

"Dudley Longden! Dudley Longden! Did you say Dudley Longden?" queried Robert thoughtfully.

"Is he a relative?"

"No."

"A special friend?"

"No."

"Anyway, he has an illustrious name. It is as pretentious as that of a college professor."

"Dudley Longden! I knew a fellow once by that name."

"I wish I knew how to get him out of papa's shop."

"Why, Grace?"

"Oh, he's a fraud, a designing, calculating fraud. Such fossils continually 'work' papa. He's perpetually giving somebody a chance, or trying somebody out."

"Not a bad idea, Grace."

"I fear papa is a theorist, a visionary, a dreamer. He now has an 'ideer' that it's a business blunder to try to sell advertising space immediately after breakfast. He argues that business men are always, at that time of day, subnormal with a decided tendency toward grouchiness. He argues, too, that the same is true on cloudy days. Isn't that a strange philosophy for a hard-headed business man of papa's financial standing to advance?"

"Say, Grace, that philosophy interests me keenly. There's something in it. Most men are grouchy until ten o'clock, but

how does your father handle the situation? Does he wait for sunshine? Does he wait for the clock to strike ten?"

"Does he wait? He certainly waits—waits for a sky of blue and a flood of sunshine, if he has to wait a month."

"And he follows this course in all business transactions?"

"Oh, certainly not; but he follows it when he's trying to put a big advertising deal 'across' that means thousands of dollars to him."

"And never until ten o'clock even though the sun is shining?"

"Never until ten o'clock even though the sun is shining."

"I believe he's right, Grace. Anyway his success speaks loudly in his favor."

"He may be right in this, but he's wrong in employing that fellow from Ohio, and he's doubly wrong in employing that Ohio fellow's sweetheart. Why, papa's density bewilders me."

"I wonder what the girl's name is."

"I don't remember, but papa gave me her name in the letter I received today."

"I believe I know the girl, but I should so much like to know for sure."

"Excuse me until I go to my room and I'll find out for you."

"Certainly."

Grace soon returned, and after she was seated, she pulled her rocker a little nearer, saying:

"Susan Bradstreet."

"That's the girl. My surmises were correct."

"You know her, Bob?"

"Yes."

"And you know Dudley Longden?"

"Yes."

"This is getting interesting—what do you know about them?"

"Both of these people came from Waterloo, Ohio," said Robert.

"Your home town?"

"Yes."

"If they're not relatives, tell me what you know about them?"

"They're not relatives. They are small potatoes of a not very desirable variety."

"I thought so."

"Yes, your father is making a stupendous blunder. He'll soon be over-run with this gang, for more will quickly follow."

"I fear so."

"They are considered driftwood, garbage, shavings in Waterloo."

A friend, real or imaginary, would not have said what Robert said; so we naturally conclude that he was no friend of Dudley Longden's. In truth, he was jealous, jealous because Dudley had secured a position with Grace's father. But that was not all; he was opposed to him because he was fearful that Dudley might hear some floating rumors from the Rocky Mountains, fearful that Dudley might expose him and his ignoble past. Naturally, any news of his desertion would first find its way back to Waterloo; thence by mail to Dudley Longden. So Robert quickly decided that it was highly important that he get Dudley out of Mr. Conkling's plant, inasmuch as exposure meant nothing less than the loss of Grace Conkling as a sweetheart.

It is incomprehensible why fate so often smooths and paves the way for the derelict. It seems that it is too often true, and it was true in the present case, for Grace replied unwittingly:

"I wish we could get rid of them."

"I believe that if we could get rid of the girl, we could easily get rid of Dudley."

"'Eggsplain' yourself."

"My idea is simply this: I know Dudley Longden's clinging disposition too well. I'm sure that he would follow the girl to the land of Timbuctoo."

"Is that the way the men do?"

"Yes, some men. Undeniably, Dudley has sent for the girl because he was suffering from homesickness and lonesomeness. I know his disposition. What he wanted and yearned for was company, companionship. So there's no doubt but that he'll follow the girl to purgatory, if necessary."

"That's where some of the girls take the boys," spoke Grace seriously.

Robert seemed to pay no attention to Grace's moralizing, and answered:

"I know Susan fairly well, and, if I can secure her a

position elsewhere, I'm sure that I can induce her to accept it."

"I sincerely hope so—go at once and see what can be done."

Robert accordingly bid Grace "adieu" and went to his room where he forthwith wrote Susan's parents asking for the daughter's New York address. As soon as he received a reply, he wrote Susan begging an engagement with her for Thursday evening of the following week, but he cautioned her to say nothing to Dudley about his coming, or his having written her.

Robert did not wish to go near "The Knickerbocker" office lest Mr. Conkling might learn of his mission and might not only resent his interference and oppose his mission, but might break up the pleasant and very promising relations which existed between him and Grace. However, he was thoroughly convinced that Dudley and Susan must be gotten out of "The Knickerbocker" offices forthwith, no difference what the cost—the hazard of being found out was too great; his western escapades were too flagrant. But, everything considered, Robert was "skating on very thin ice."

Of course Susan was delighted upon receiving Robert's invitation, inasmuch as he was generally considered by womankind a prize de luxe. She accepted eagerly and at once began making extensive dress preparations for the occasion. A hustling, wide-awake, young lady adjusts herself to unaccustomed environments and unexpected dress innovations more readily than men. Susan had been in New York less than a month, but she had already made rapid progress in adjusting her wardrobe to up-to-date styles. However, she had not only expended every cent at her command, but she had in her mad effort to be "in style" borrowed fifty dollars of Dudley.

Heretofore, Susan and Dudley had habitually gone somewhere each and every evening. Finally the Thursday evening came when Robert was to accompany her to the theater. After Susan and Dudley had dined together that evening, Dudley accompanied her to her rooming place, saying, as he lifted his hat:

"Goodby, Susan; I'll see you in an hour."

"Oh, please don't come this evening, Dudley—I'm completely fagged out."

"You're not sick?"

"No, just tired."

"Anyway, I'll come around after a while to see how you are feeling."

"Don't do it, Dudley—I don't want to be bothered this evening—I have some letters to write."

Dudley said nothing more. He wondered, but he was not suspicious. He went to his room for the night as happily as any sunflower ever turned its smiling face toward the setting sun. The next morning Susan was not as cordial as usual, but Dudley was still confidently unsuspecting. That evening when he suggested going to the theater, Susan answered pointedly:

"No, I'm not going."

"What's the trouble, Susan? Have I done anything wrong? Anything to offend you?"

"Not that I know of."

"Then why this coldness?"

"Next Monday I'm going to another job."

"To another job?"

"What's the trouble with you and Mr. Conkling?"

"Nothing, but when I can get more money, why should I stay with Mr. C.?"

"Very much more money?" asked Dudley.

"Double what I am now getting," said Susan.

"Are you sure?"

"Perfectly sure."

"There's something wrong, Susan."

"Maybe it's you."

Susan's independence not only surprised Dudley and took him unawares, but her arrogance overwhelmed him. He knew too well that the salary that Susan mentioned was exorbitant and that someone had intervened. He was right. In truth, Robert was paying half of Susan's salary; he had so arranged it with the management that he might hasten his plan to a successful conclusion. Dudley looked straight into Susan's eyes and questioned pointedly:

"Susan, who's getting you this job?"

"Don't you think a woman has enough gumption to apply for and secure a position?"

"Yes, but something has happened. Someone else is doing this, someone else is interested in you."

"Anything wrong about that?"

"Nothing in the least."

As heretofore stated, Robert's plan was broader than Susan imagined: his scheme presumed that Dudley would follow Susan to her new job which would naturally prevent any rumors of his western escapade from reaching Grace's or Mr. Conkling's ears; but it seemed that his plan was going to fail. Susan was madly in love with Robert and she did not want Dudley around to annoy her and interfere with Robert's courtship. Robert could not explain his plan directly to Dudley lest he might tell Mr. Conkling who might bitterly resent any outside interference with any of the employees of "The Knickerbocker." So the entire scheme had to be worked through Susan whom Robert had sworn to eternal secrecy.

Susan, in her last reply, had virtually acknowledged that she had another masculine admirer, and her tone indicated that she was openly hostile to Dudley's advances and no longer considered him a near-friend. She now made a further confession:

"Dudley, you do not wear fine enough clothes."

"So it's a matter of dress, is it?"

"Yes, in part. Your clothes make me ashamed of you."

"What if I should buy a new suit?"

"Don't do it on my account, Dudley—I might be wrong."

"Your friend is a swell dresser?"

"He certainly is."

"As swell as Robert Tadmores?"

"Yes."

"Have I ever met him?"

"I think so."

"It's Robert Tadmores. I know it is Robert Tadmores—isn't it?"

"Who told you? You're always a-nosin' into my affairs."

"I was merely asking you, Susan."

"No, you weren't either," answered Susan, who now was angry and in tears.

This precipitate reply was the cause of relations being abruptly broken off between Susan and Dudley. Each went his separate way. Dudley was deeply grieved; it seemed to him that he had been buffeted by adverse winds all his days, but he bravely kept to his course hiding his amorous troubles in the secret recesses of his heart.

On Monday morning Robert escorted Susan to her new position and bid her a "fond goodbye." He then took the first train

for Belmont, feeling that his work had been eminently successful, believing that as soon as he was gone Dudley would follow Susan away from "The Knickerbocker" offices to her new place of employment.

Robert recited all of the happenings to Grace as soon as he reached Belmont. Grace was jubilant. She not only approved all that he had done, but she spoke warm words of commendation, and she muttered to herself:

"There is a lad that certainly does things. He's slated to be a great man. I trust I shall be able to claim him as my husband."

So Robert was not only pleased with himself, but Grace was so pleased with him that she was madly in love with him.

On the following Monday Robert slipped down to New York to see how Susan was progressing, to see how she liked her new job, to see if Dudley had followed her as he thought Dudley would. Susan was inured to toil. All her days she had been taught to work. So the tasks never became too arduous, or the hours too long or the job too irksome when the pay was inviting.

Robert found her working diligently. After the two had exchanged greetings, Robert exclaimed involuntarily:

"Where's Dudley?"

"I don't know nothing about Dudley."

"I thought you were his sweetheart," smiled Robert.

"I didn't suppose you'd want him to come to see me—most men object."

"It will be all right with me, Susan."

"Then you're going to quit me?"

"Oh, no; but Susan I've got a dozen girls."

"I don't like that."

"Don't you know that that is the style in New York?"

"Then I don't like New York styles."

"I supposed you'd bring Dudley with you."

"I didn't ask him."

"My idea was to help Dudley, too, but I didn't want him to know that I was helping him."

"Dudley and I are not friends any more."

"Why?"

"Because."

"But I'll have to go back to Belmont to my studies, and I

can seldom come over here. You ought to be friendly to Dudley—he'll take you some place every night."

"You could write me, Robert, and you could come down to see me every Sunday."

"But what's the matter with Dudley? He's a fine fellow."

"I'll wait for you, Robert. I'll get lonesome, I know, but I can wait from one Sunday to another."

"I thank you, Susan, but I'm going south—no, to the Philippines, or somewhere for a couple years," answered Robert in desperation.

"Now, Robert, that's no way to do."

"Why, Susan?"

"Because I've quit Dudley."

"I don't understand you, Susan."

"I mean simply this, Robert; I like you better."

"Now, Susan, you must remember that the boys in the cities go with all the girls."

"Well, you know that's not the way we did back home, and that's not the way our burgomaster taught us."

"Oh, they're back-woodsy back home, and the burgomasters, they are old 'fogies'."

"I believe I'd rather be a little old-fashioned than to be so swift."

"You'll see things differently after a while, after you learn and know New York."

"Goodby, Robert, you needn't come to see me any more."

"Now, Susan, be reasonable—I'm your friend."

"Goodby, Robert. I give one fellow all my love, and I expect all of his in return."

"Goodby, Susan; I'll see you in a month or so."

"No, Robert, I guess you'd better not come."

"You would let me call upon you fashionably, wouldn't you?"

"You wouldn't be welcome, Robert."

As Robert thoughtfully meandered away from Susan's rooming-house, he thoughtfully muttered to himself:

"Now she's mad. She's in love with me and wants to marry me. What's a fellow going to do? If I even smile at a girl she thinks I'm going to marry her. I must be an unusual fellow, or all the girls wouldn't fall in love with me at sight. Is it I, or is it my clothes?"

Susan was heart-broken. She was a simple, frank, innocent,

country girl, unused to the restraints and conventions of city life. Her motives were pure and noble, and she believed every young man to be honest and sincere. She thought that when a young man took her to the theater two or three times that he was in love, that they were engaged, that soon they would be married.

XIII

COLLEGE LIFE

The peach trees were in bloom. All creation was astir with the quickening freshness of spring. Grace, too, was subconsciously happy since Dudley's lady friend had been gotten out of her father's offices. The students at Belmont were bubbling over with vivacity and expectancy because of their baseball team. It was as yet an untried quantity, but the Belmontians were very hopeful; in fact, their enthusiasm had reached the boiling point. The first game was with Blair two weeks hence, and the outcome was now being discussed with fervor in all of the congregating places of the student body. Many are the athletic victories that are won in the drawing-room; many are the foes that are vanquished in the minds of men who frequent cigar stores, fraternity halls, and barber-shops on the eve of battle.

Robert Tadmores was the elusive college twirler, and Belmont had more faith in his athletic accomplishments than it had in the strength of Gibraltar. In truth the entire college had an unfaltering confidence in him; and Robert had supreme confidence in himself—a combination that usually wins.

Young Tadmores was the sole possessor of a high-grade, high-powered, seven-passenger limousine. His colored chauffeur was a fast, but skillful driver. He was, in truth, a colored autocrat, and naturally he commanded a big salary. At least five times each week this dignified, well-groomed gentleman with the flashy Tadmores machine made a trip to New York, starting at five o'clock, arriving in time to take dinner at a fashionable cafe, and returning near two A. M. Robert would have gone every night, but "Friday" refused to make the trip more than five times each week, and "Friday" seemed to be boss. Grace Conkling, Helen Hunt, a sorority friend, and Robert with two of his fashionable fraters usually made the pilgrimage to the metropolis on two of the evenings, during which the party went, after dinner, either to the theater or to

some special social function. Robert was host, and of course Robert paid the bills.

On the other three evenings of the week the ladies remained in Belmont while Robert and five of his more congenial friends made the trip to gilded halls, to gaming table, to places where intoxicants were served by women in scarlet, to the regions of the underworld of New York.

It was a gay, fast life that young Tadmor was living. He, like many other young men, imagined that he was drinking nectar and having a great time. He frequently said to himself:

"Why should a young man toil? I hate work. I don't have to labor. I hate duty. Good fortune is my pal. I have money, I have physical strength, I have friends innumerable, I have social standing—what more could an intelligent, promising young man ask for? Studying is a dog's life. It's so much easier to slide through college with a jolly laugh and a happy-go-lucky spirit. A joke and a laugh will take you farther than a perfect lesson. Yes, I've decided to 'jolly' my way through life and let the foolish, let those who will labor and toil and struggle."

It was now the time of year when all creation is in love, when chivalrous, promising young men, and modest, gracious young ladies go strolling—go strolling through the parks and across the campuses away from the haunts of men. They are under the enchanted spell of the dreamy, hazy atmosphere of spring. It is enervating, and it has magic perched upon its wings. These are serious moments. These are dangerous moments. Lovers are as helpless as babes in the woods. No words are spoken; but a glance, a nod, the pressure of the hand betrays the secret of the heart. There is a language of the soul—it is psychic—that speaks louder than words. Though the promenade be in silence, and all creation be hushed and still, yet the soul speaks volubly.

Yes, springtime is mating-time, and it always brings its crop of love affairs out of college and in college, as surely as it brings its crop of onions in our gardens. It is an unwritten law of collegedom that a young man must scatter his affections; still, the lawbreakers are many. But what matters the rules of college ethics when a young man is in love? You'd just as well try to dam back the ocean tides. Taunts and ridicule are ineffective, for a young man in love rather

likes to be teased because of what it implies. But, if after a while the storm of ridicule becomes too biting, too scathing, the young fellow simply displays the American spirit of independence, and asserts boldly that he will pay his respects to any young lady he pleases and that it is nobody's business.

The table at which Grace and Robert ate was a very fashionable one. Only the socially select were allowed to enter there. It was exclusive. Its membership consisted of a sorority and a fraternity which considered themselves the cream of the college. The fraternity system is the college system of castes. It is usually based upon social supremacy, and social supremacy is always based upon snobbishness.

The entire first floor of the ladies' dormitory, save a parlor and an office and a kitchen, was one immense dining hall. There were some twenty large tables in all, each of which accommodated some thirty students. The diners at each table were presumably equal, socially; but woe be unto that creature, be he male or female, that dared to presume, that dared to intrude—you have seen robins and blackbirds at war when each wanted the same tree for a nesting place; and you have seen the feathers fall, and heard the wild shrieks of battle.

Grace and Helen were talking confidentially in their room while making their toilet for dinner. Grace ejaculated in glee:

"Oh, I forgot; I have an invitation to the dance."

"For—?"

"Thursday evening—the grand ball, you know."

"Who from?"

"Oh, one of the Deltas."

"Robert, of course?"

"Yes."

"How grand! but it seems, Grace, that you're always in luck."

"You received no invitation?"

"Yes, but shocking! it was from a Sigma, and I hate the Sigmas—they have absolutely no social standing."

"That is true, Helen, but they're good students."

"Good students! What does scholarship amount to? You can make a student out of a fox terrier, but social excellence is inborn—it cannot be bought or sold."

"Helen, I fear that you are a little narrow—all of the Sigmas are delightfully dependable fellows."

"They're hayseeds, I tell you—nothing but hayseeds—and you know it, Grace Conkling."

"Anyway, you'd get to go. It's going to be a full-dress affair, I guess. Everybody and his dog will be there. There's no fun in staying at home."

"Fun! What fun would there be in chopping your own head off? What would the Deltas think? And what would they do? They simply never would invite me again to go with them. They'd sneer at me, and say: 'Heh! she must be small potatoes or she wouldn't go with a threadbare Sigma to such a pretentious social function as a grand ball. Why, Grace, it would be far wiser for me to stay at home and go to bed.'"

"I see your point of view, Helen. It is quite true that it might give you a social setback. I had not thought of it that way."

"Not only that: it would hurt our sorority, for it would certainly be a reflection. Grace, you certainly know that it's social prestige that counts above everything else in this world."

"I'd simply ask one of the Deltas to take me."

"Would you, really?"

"I certainly would."

"I just believe I will, Grace—I hadn't thought of that."

"Sure I would. If they wish to monopolize our sorority and hobnob with its members, the Deltas should see to it that all of our members get to attend all the important social functions."

"I'm not going to be a social outcast—I'll quit Belmont and go to some other college first."

"I'll drop a hint, Helen. You'll get a 'bid' all right."

"Do speak a word, Grace. I don't want to go with a hayseed."

Grace and Helen now started downstairs, arm in arm, to dinner. Robert was just coming up the steps to the dormitory. Grace whispered excitedly:

"Walk slow, Helen! Walk slow! but as soon as Robert speaks to us, you walk quickly on, and I'll go fishing for you."

"Thank you, Grace—I'll do as much for you some day," answered Helen imploringly, and she accordingly stepped briskly forward as Robert approached.

"How do you do, Miss Conkling?" questioned Robert debonairly.

"Why how do you do?" answered Grace with dignity.

"Which will you have for dinner, Miss Conkling, rabbit or 'possum?"

"Neither, if you please."

"Ditto."

"Which will you take, Mr. Tadmire, greens or hominy?"

"Why, yes; I'll take a few greens and a little hominy."

"Say, Robert, Helen has no company for the grand ball Thursday eve."

"She hasn't?"

"And she wishes to go very much."

"I'll certainly look after Helen's interests."

"A 'Sig' wanted to take her, but she refused him."

"You tell Helen that I'll arrange affairs for her all right. We boys had matters all fixed out—Stowers was to take her, but he was called home on account of sickness."

"Oh, that way. Helen and I both wondered."

They had now reached their table and soon were eating prunes and greens. Robert smiled and whispered to Grace:

"Prunes and greens! Didn't I tell you?"

"Oh, you said greens and hominy, and there's quite a difference between prunes and hominy."

"Not so much, now; grandma eats prunes, and grandpa eats hominy; so, you see, they're pretty much the same."

"Excuse me—I forgot that but few men ever make mistakes. But when's our first ball game?"

"One week from Saturday, with our old friend and rival, Blair," replied Robert with enthusiasm.

"Of course we'll beat them."

"Yea, verily—if our luck holds out."

"Luck? I trust you're not depending upon luck to carry you through."

"Oh no, still luck is always a very desirable pal on the field of sports as well as in the game of life."

"Do you pronounce millionaires the direct resultant of luck?"

"In a sense, yes; in another sense, no. I believe three elements enter into the making of a millionaire: luck, foresight and greed. Sometimes one is the prevailing and determining factor, and sometimes another, and sometimes all three are equal factors. By greed I mean that selfish motive in man which causes him to buy, or 'freeze out' all his competitors that

he may get rid of competition, or to 'fix' prices with competitors so the business will yield an enormous and exorbitant profit."

"That's enough—the water's getting too deep."

"Do you have anything under Dr. Propper?"

"Yes, ethics."

"Isn't he grouchy?"

"That depends."

"Depends upon what?"

"Upon whether he has seen Miss Moon before class. If he has had the delightful pleasure of walking to East College with her, he is as sweet as a sugar lump and as debonair as a dandy; but if he hasn't seen her, he's equal to a bearcat."

"I guess then I have unfortunately been around him when he was playing the part of the bearcat."

"Really, at times he's as delightful as a dish of dead-ripe strawberries and cream," replied Grace.

"I believe I'll see what Miss Moon will charge to sit beside him during my recitation hour," replied Robert with an infectious smile.

"Such an arrangement might prove a good investment. Has he really been rude?"

"Rude? I pronounce him a pug and a grouch, a man without breeding or civility."

"Economics is my most enjoyable study, but Professor Whitaker is certainly a peculiar fellow. He puts his nose glasses on his thumb, just so, plays on his fingers as you play on a slide trombone, and then he concatenates everything."

"I have never heard of that kind of a cat."

"I presume not; it's a very rare species, but we have too many of them, we're simply overrun with them, in our classroom."

Thus the peculiarities and eccentricities of the various professors were carefully vivisected throughout the rest of the noonday meal. To you who do not already know, listen! a bunch of college students is the most critical jury in the world. There is no subject or super-subject which they do not deem themselves competent to pass upon, and they do so, too, with a peculiar relish and an unfaltering officiousness that causes abler men to look aghast.

Grace and Helen had invited two sorority girls to their room to a chafing-dish party on this Saturday evening.

Saturday evening is always an evening of relaxation and diversion. Then every student is out for a good time and frequently the festivities encroach upon the Sabbath.

Grace and Helen's company arrived at seven-thirty. One was a blonde, the other a brunette. Grace at once started the oyster stew, followed with small cubes of toast and ended with fudge. In the course of events one of the invited guests, the blonde, remarked:

"Grace, you and Robert seem to be very much interested in each other."

"Why not? We are taking biology, and right now we are studying tadpoles."

"Indeed! And Robert's your specimen? Have you really traced him as far back as the tadpole?"

"Yes; in fact, Robert is still a tadpole—I told him so."

"And you have traced him through the monkey stage?"

"As I said, he has not got that far along," smiled Grace demurely.

"It must be interesting—I believe I'll take biology."

"Do! You know a biologist studies all sorts of animals."

The girls laughed and Grace continued more seriously:

"Sincerely, girls, Robert's a friend, but nothing more."

"How do we know?" queried Helen with a wink and a giggle.

"Oh, I'll confess that Robert's a breezy, likable fellow with plenty of ginger," interposed Grace.

"He's the best dressed man I ever knew," suggested the brunette guest.

"He has such a clean, ruddy countenance which is a sure sign of good morals and perfect health," replied Grace eulogistically.

"He must shave twice a day," interposed Helen.

"Perhaps he decapitates each whisker as soon as it peeps out," interposed the blonde.

"I have never known Robert Tadmire to wear the improper thing. He knows what to wear and when to wear it, and he has the togs to wear; so what more do you want?" explained Helen confidentially.

"His wardrobe has certainly cost something," interposed the brunette.

"Not less than five thousand, I should say," suggested Helen with abandon.

"I believe I could expend four thousand of it to a better advantage."

"You'd probably do just as he has done, if you had as much money as he has. What I admire about Mr. Tadmire is his physical make-up. He's a perfect specimen of health, happiness and good cheer. He's a delightful concoction of good nature, kindness, polish and politeness," eulogized Grace.

"Grace is always a lucky mortal," interposed Helen.

"Are we invited?" queried the brunette.

"No, you're not," spoke Grace decisively, and then she continued, "I tell you we're no more than friends—I mean Robert and I. Papa has a great deal to say about such insignificant matters, and no one that I know of has ever yet dreamed of asking his approval."

"A church wedding, I suppose," commented the blonde indifferently.

"She's already promised me that I might be bridesmaid," remarked Helen.

"It's false. It's not true. She has prevaricated. She's a traitor. I'm in the hands of my enemies. Police! Help!" shouted Grace in a loud voice followed by a luminous smile.

Thus the fun and hilarity and jollity continued until midnight when each bid the rest adieu and repaired to her room.

XIV

DUDLEY AND ANNA

Dudley Longden was wasting no opportunities. He had diligently and devotedly attended night school; he had studied doggedly and conscientiously; he had improved his English unbelievably. He had broadened the horizon of his life a hundredfold, had become acquainted with the manners and customs of metropolitan life, had put away boyish fancies and had become a thinker. Being jostled and elbowed and buffeted by the constant flow of the human tide no longer annoyed him, or attracted his attention, except casually. He had now become acclimated. He really enjoyed the many phases and diversions of urban life. He would not now go back to his father's farm even though it should be given to him, if it were given on the condition that he should cultivate it and live upon it.

True, Susan's high-handed and unexpected course had temporarily stunned Dudley. He was chagrined, mortified, offended and his heart was bleeding, but he was as stoical as an Indian brave. No one knew or ever would know that he had been jilted. He still saw Susan occasionally and always addressed her politely and considerately, but the old-time regard for her resembled the ashes and charred ruins of a fire in the clearing—a fire that was dead, although it once roared and crackled and burned most ardently.

He had now become proficient as a linotype operator, but no one knew save Dudley's tutor and Mr. Conkling. Dudley had considerately, before he started, secured the editor's full consent and permission. Now he was doing one-half of his tutor's work after supper. But the information was broadcasted that Dudley's tutor did one-half of his work after supper, thereby making it unnecessary for him to come to work until after lunch each day. However, Mr. Roberts had violated one of the primary rules of the union; namely, that of teaching an outsider the art of operating a linotype machine; but Mr. Roberts was intensely human; yes, he was selfishly human.

He was getting the best of it. He was getting a full day's pay for a half day's work—why not cultivate the morning-glory?

Dudley had now made many friends. He was in better repute. He was courteous and kindly and accommodating. Everybody showed him consideration and deference. His enemies had become his friends. The time was, when life meant little to him, but now living was a joy unspeakable, and New York was a city of promise.

Since Susan had sidestepped him Dudley had been steadfastly keeping his eye on Anna Bridgeport, a young lady in the mailing department of "The Knickerbocker." Anna's father was a walking delegate of the Printer's Union. She was a pretty girl with plump, rotund cheeks, regular features, a clear complexion, and wore the clothes of an Egyptian princess. However she was proud and arrogant, overbearing and unkindly in her ways, and naturally she was a radical unionist.

Anna really loved Dudley, but she had not forgotten how inconsiderately he had been ridiculed when he first entered "The Knickerbocker" offices; and she held herself aloof, like a great many people of the present day, until she discovered the drift—both the ebb and the flow—of public opinion. Besides, Dudley was too thrifty to suit her artistic fancy which had visions of innumerable fine clothes, a fine automobile, and expensive dinner parties. No, Dudley was not stylish enough; his clothes were too plain and too painfully cheap; his trousers bagged too much at the knees; his coat had seen the cleaners too seldom; his cravat was too old and too threadbare; and his hair was too long—in short, he was too miserly and too thrifty to suit her æsthetic nature. Anna expended her money—all her money—on clothes while Dudley expended but little; she saved not a cent, while he placed ninety per cent of his money in the bank.

On this beautiful November evening Anna was late in finishing her work. Dudley, noticing that she was working after hours, approached her diffidently and very considerably offered his services, saying:

"Anna, can I help you any?"

"No, thank you, Dudley—I'm just through."

"How was that apple?"

"Oh, it was simply delicious, Dudley. So it was you that placed that luscious Grimes Golden on my desk?"

"It may have been, Anna."

"I found a box of chocolates in my desk, too."

"Indeed!"

"Guilty or not guilty?"

"It isn't fair to make a fellow convict himself."

"You look guilty, so I'll just fine you—yes, I'll just fine you another box of chocolates to be delivered at my desk two days hence," heartily laughed Anna.

"Have you joined the Printer's Union, Dudley?" she continued.

"Not yet, Anna."

"Why don't you join? Why do you hesitate?"

"I can't afford it."

"No, Dudley, that isn't it; union wages are always higher than non-union wages."

"Anna, I just can't make demands upon Mr. Conkling—that man has been a father to me."

"Now, that's all buncombe, Dudley. Haven't you earned every cent of the money that you have received?"

"I think so, and perhaps more."

"Then why are you so chicken-hearted?"

"Simply beause Mr. Conkling took me in when I was down and out, when I was hungry, when I didn't have a cent in my pocket. He took me in when everybody else had turned me down. He was a friend when no one else cared, a friend when I sorely needed a friend."

"Then you think for that, you ought to be a slave the balance of your days?"

"No, not that, Anna. I'm not a slave."

"Some of the union operators think you are an operator."

"Where did they get that idea?"

"They have heard a linotype machine going as late as twelve o'clock at night."

"I never was in a printshop until I came to New York."

"Anyway, they think that someone is playing traitor."

"They'll have to prove that, Anna."

"Besides they are getting 'sore' because you do not join the union."

"Anna, frankly, I think too much of Mr. Conkling to join the union at this time."

"You don't think very much of me then."

"Why, I thought that Mr. Conkling was a friend of yours."

"No man who has money is a friend of labor, Dudley."

Dudley's eyes now were downcast. He thought for a moment and then replied:

"Anna, what would we poor folks do, if it were not for men of wealth?"

"We'd live like kings, that's what we'd do."

"But how?" he asked.

"Wouldn't we get the money that these vultures of wealth accumulate?"

"But how would we get our start? Who'd employ us? Nobody could employ us except a person who had money."

"If the laboring man got all that was coming to him, we wouldn't have any poor folks," argued Anna.

"Your notion of things is a little hazy, it seems to me."

"Of course you'd say so—you're an enemy of labor and always have been."

"No, Anna. I'm poor and, naturally, I have no good reason for being unfriendly to labor."

"I believe that you're nothing more than a spy working in Mr. Conkling's interests."

"Why Anna Bridgeport!"

"If all the laboring people would only stand together for a while, we'd all be rich folks."

"Do you mean that we'd all be just like Mr. Conkling?"

"Exactly."

"I thought you disliked Mr. Conkling, and did not approve of his methods."

"I don't," said the girl.

"Why do you dislike him, if you want to be like him?" asked Dudley.

"I'd like to have his money."

"I thought you said that the man with money was an enemy of labor."

"I did," said Anna.

"Then if you had money, you'd be our enemy?"

"I didn't say that, Dudley. You're always trying to pick a fellow to pieces."

"Then I misunderstood you."

"I guess you did," answered Anna pertly as she reached for her hat and parasol.

"If you'll wait until I bolt the rear doors, I'll walk home with you—it's such a delightful evening."

"I don't know whether I want to go with you or not."

Dudley turned and regarded her in a sort of a quizzical way, but he spoke not a word. Anna was now battling between love and arrogance. In a moment she commanded imperiously:

"Well, hurry, if you're going."

Dudley turned and quickly bolted the rear doors and hastily returned to the place where Anna was waiting. He regarded her with inquiring eyes, reached for her parasol and they started; but no words were spoken while they were quitting "The Knickerbocker" offices. As the two walked deliberately down the street, Dudley occasionally regarded Anna with admiring eyes. Her clothes were pretentious, almost royal in their richness. He really couldn't understand how she could afford them. He couldn't understand where she got them or how. Then he wondered—he wondered as all men wonder when they see an over-dressed woman. A neatly dressed woman is a joy forever, but an over-dressed woman is doing herself a great injury.

Then Dudley's eyes wandered to Anna's exquisite countenance which was almost perfect in its symmetry, which was plush-like in its texture, which had a lingering charm that was almost divine in its freshness and its purity. In spirit he could not but fall down and worship her, for she had all the qualities of a goddess, but—then he hesitated—he remembered her flaming temper and her venomous tongue; and he concluded that she, too, must be made of clay; he concluded that she must be a shrew. However, there is something that draws a man on, although a thousand small voices may be whispering, "Beware!" He always thinks that he can turn back; he always thinks that he is master of the situation; he is not afraid.

They had almost gone a square, when Dudley remarked:

"Anna, maybe you'd rather take a car; perhaps you'd rather not walk home tonight."

"Then you think the crowded sidewalks are no place for gourds?"

"No—rosebuds."

Anna smiled and Dudley chuckled. In a moment she queried:

"Dudley, why don't you wear better clothes?"

"I can't afford them, Anna."

"Can't afford to be decent?"

"I didn't know that poverty was indecent," answered Dudley.

"Dudley, you're certainly not a 'living model.'"

"I don't want to be, Anna."

"Maybe that's your trouble."

"I'm not having any trouble that I know of."

"What do you do with your money?" she asked.

"Save it," he replied laconically.

"What good would it do you, if you should die tomorrow?"

"I'm not expecting to die tomorrow, and it might do me considerable good the day after tomorrow."

"I'd rather be respected now than when I'm eighty," said Anna.

"Then it takes clothes to command respect?" he asked.

"Undeniably. Men are so slow, so dense, so obtuse."

"Why not say ignorant?" Anna.

"I guess I will."

"Now recurring to what you said about being respected at eighty: naturally, everybody would like to be respected now and then, but I'd ten times over rather not be respected now if by so doing, I'll be a pauper when I'm eighty. 'Of all sad words of tongue or pen—' you know the rest."

"I spend my money and get the good out of it," insisted Anna.

"I save twenty-five dollars a week."

"For land's sake, boy! how much do you get?"

"More than twenty-five."

"You could be somebody if you would."

"Thank you. I say, 'thank you' once more. I'd rather be nobody and have a bank account than to be somebody and be dead broke."

"Then you're exactly what you want to be?" asked Anna.

The arrogance and the toss of the head that accompanied this remark angered Dudley considerably, but he waited until he had lashed his temper into subjection before he replied:

"Allow me to repeat, Anna; I'd rather be a tramp with a hundred dollars in my pocket than be a fashion-plate without a cent in my pocket. Now you can draw your own conclusions."

"Are you alluding to me, sir?"

"I said, 'fashion-plate'—you're not a fashion-plate are you?"

"I don't like your insinuations," replied the girl angrily.

"You shouldn't try to wear shoes that don't fit you."

"Perhaps not."

"I always had a horror of dying a poor man. It's pitiable, I tell you; it's heart-rending to be a public charge in the evening of life. Too many find it out too late. I'd rather die with a bank account, I say."

"Foolish man! Our hardest worked men today are millionaires over sixty. They have brainstorms, insomnia, and nervous debility. They are nervous wrecks. They can't sleep, they can't eat, they can't die. They are to be pitied; they are miserable and they make everybody else miserable."

"You are talking about a fool now. A hog and a miser ought to have brainstorm, but even this is not more harrowing than that of having a quartette of starving children crying around your doorstep, crying, I say, for bread. Such a man doesn't dare to die. He'd probably be glad to die, but, if he has any conscience he doesn't dare to die," Dudley argued.

"All millionaires have more of a jaded look than our street cleaners," said Anna.

"That's their fault. The millionaire can always go to Florida in winter and to Canada in the summer, but the street cleaner goes to work. He was born a drudge and he'll die a drudge."

"This is exactly what I say would happen to you were it not for the Printer's Union, Dudley. All of us poor creatures would be working for fifty cents a day if it were not for our beloved union."

"The American laborer is the best paid man in the world today," said Dudley.

"That doesn't prove anything. There may be different degrees of hell for all I know. I believe the laboring man is the 'goat' of the world. The poor man has pork shank for dinner, while the boss has turkey. The poor man has made his boss what he is; he has poured out his vitality and his life-blood for his employer, but when the cake is cut, the laboring man gets the crumbs."

"You just said that the millionaires of today are more jaded than our street cleaners. That's the best answer that I can give you when you say that labor is the 'goat' of the world. If the man of wealth is debilitated at forty, while the laboring man is well preserved at sixty, who deserves our sympathy?"

"But you didn't agree with me," said Anna.

"No, I don't agree with you now. I say it is unnecessary for a millionaire to be jaded at forty, but I grant you that such is usually the case; and I further say that every laboring man ought to prosper and enjoy and be thrifty and have a home of his own if he takes care of his wages."

"You're stubborn. You wouldn't be convinced of anything."

"I grant you that the laboring man should be well paid."

"It's a wonder," said the girl.

"The laboring man deserves every consideration. He deserves a home, he deserves decent clothes, he deserves an opportunity to go to church and to educate his family, the laboring man deserves to live long and well," added Dudley.

"That's saying a good deal for you, but you haven't gone far enough; he deserves to be wealthy; the wealth of the world ought to be redistributed, and everybody ought to be given his proportionate share."

"How would you fairly redistribute the wealth of the world?" asked the boy.

"That's easy. I'd simply divide all the wealth of the world into as many parts as there are men, women and children in the world," said Anna.

"How long would everybody stay equal?"

"Until a few shoats like Conkling took advantage of some of the rest of us."

"I don't think of the rich man as you do. I regard him as a benefactor. If a certain man or combination of men have superior managing ability, if they have more 'ginger' than the rest of us, if they are geniuses in finance, if they have an uncanny insight into the future and can see clearer and farther than other men, then I see no reason why they are not entitled to their reward."

"There's no use in us discussing this question; you couldn't convince me in twenty years," said Anna.

"On the contrary I'm open to conviction. If you can show me wherein I am wrong, I'm willing to acknowledge it," replied Dudley.

"I wouldn't try to convince any young man, especially a fresh, smart young man just from the country, Dudley."

"I certainly beg your pardon if I have been 'fresh.' I did not intend to be. In fact, I always try to be frank, fair, and unprejudiced."

They had now reached Anna's unpretentious home. Dudley started confidently up the walk, but Anna suddenly stopped him, saying:

"You'd better not go any farther, Dudley, papa's angry because you have not joined the union."

"Then I certainly beg your pardon."

"You know father is a walking delegate and it would not look just right, he thinks, for a non-union man to call upon his daughter."

"Very well. Goodnight," replied Dudley as he politely raised his hat and started toward the heart of the metropolis.

XV

THOSE TROUBLESOME REPORTERS

University life at Belmont with its friendships, its hopes, and its promises progressed with few variations throughout the balance of the college year. As heretofore, it was punctuated with sorority dances and social functions, with lectures and recitals, with joys and fears, with the constant clamor for athletic prestige and social preferment. All the while the friendship of Grace and Robert was gradually ripening not only into a warmer friendship, but into love and adoration.

It was soon spring again. Time hurries rapidly past for those who toil earnestly and those who love ardently. The anæsthesia of love and the anæsthesia of work are more potent than absinthe in burying the lagging moments in the sea of forgetfulness.

Young Tadmor still made pilgrimages to New York. He always played the role of host and paymaster, and, naturally, he had a host of friends—in truth his friendship was very much prized and very diligently sought after by all collegedom, for it had an actual cash value.

Late in May in this, his junior year, Robert planned an elaborate banquet for his more intimate masculine friends, some sixty in all. This banquet was served at a fashionable hostelry in New York, and was afterward denominated "The Feast of Belshazzar." The gentlemen made the journey to the metropolis in full-dress suits and high-speed automobiles. The banquet was served in the "Gold Room." The decorations were prodigal, being both costly and elaborate. Four supposedly beautiful girls occupied thrones near the center of each of the four sides of the banquet hall. Each girl represented one of the four seasons of the year, and each throne was an elaborately decorated bower in keeping with the season that it represented.

Between each of these gaudily bedecked goddesses played a prodigious fountain upon floating patches of full-blown water lilies. American beauties were not only smiling from wall-pockets everywhere, but they were festooned about the room.

The lighting was brilliant if not dazzling. The dining-table was circular. The waiters served from the center. Three immense spheres were suspended from the ceiling. They were covered with royal purple and festooned with smilax and sweet peas. As soon as the guests were seated, the top halves of the spheres raised, while the lower halves lowered. In the lower half of each sphere sat four enticing girls serenely fanning themselves. They were exquisitely gowned, and their cheeks and their lips had the ardor of the red, red rose; but it was not the handiwork of nature—it was a hand-painting. The young ladies pretended to be modest, blushed innocently and demurely, wore a few strings of pearls, some diamonds, flowing streamers and a smile. As soon as the spheres reached the floor, the girls sprang to their feet, waltzed to a nearby platform especially arranged for the evening and gave the dance of "Spring." After this they gave portions of "Salome," and "Cleopatra," and several serpentine dances to the great delight of Robert's Belmontian guests. After a program of some thirty moments, these denizens of fairyland served the assembled students tempting eatables, fascinating smiles, shy glances, and debonair bows.

Soon the wines and champagnes were served. Robert drank freely and greedily as he proposed toast after toast to this and that dancing girl. Finally he was drunk, crazy drunk. What a time he was having! Things were going around. He thought the table was a merry-go-round; and, with the assistance of two of his friends, he climbed right upon the merry-go-round and made many fiery and impassioned, but senseless speeches. Someway, he could not keep his balance. He seemed to be doing some tight-rope walking. Suddenly he authoritatively commanded a half-score of his pals to follow him. They could do naught but obey; so he, followed by his comrades, boldly strode down the center of the table, upsetting rare pieces of china and breaking innumerable cut glass nappies and vases and water jugs. Finally the table gave away. The crash of the falling china was more than disconcerting, it was terrifying. The banquet had degenerated into an orgy. The students wildly, but ardently embraced the dancing girls. This was, in truth, the "Feast of Belshazzar."

The hotel management naturally became alarmed and called the police lest all of its elegant furniture and rare china might be totally destroyed. The police quickly responded; but

as they entered one door the banqueters went out an opposite door, save Mr. Tadmire, who was so drunk that he could not tell a policeman from the Queen of Sheba. In fact he was lying prone upon the floor, helpless and alone. He looked wildly about as does everyone who is in the throes of an intoxicating stupor. Seeing no one, he shouted angrily:

"Where's everybody?"

"We're all here," answered one of the officers.

"Come and drink with me," begged Tadmire.

"I'm afraid—afraid it's hair tonic. You don't look good to me."

"Are you a friend of mine?"

"Sure; I'm going to see you through."

"What, what did you say?" asked Tadmire.

"What does all this broken china mean?" asked the officer.

"Well sir—is anybody listenin'?"

"No, I think not."

"Then, I'll tell you— are you a pal of mine?"

"Sure I'm one of your pals."

"Well, I got drunk."

"You're a-jokin' me," said the policeman.

"No, I'm not; I'm tellin' you straight."

"You don't look it."

"Really?" asked Tadmire in a maudlin voice.

"No—o, you don't look it—you look as fresh as a mornin'-glory all covered with dew."

"I am, but I guess I got hold of some dew that was doctored."

"Whom do you suspect?" asked the policeman.

"I don't expect nobody. I don't want to see nobody. What—what's your name?"

"McDuff."

"McDuff? McDuff? McDuff?"

"You don't know me."

"No, I guess—I guess I don't—where are you from?" asked Bob.

"Headquarters. This must have been a high-toned jambo-ree," said McDuff.

"Haven't you got, haven't you got on a policeman's bonnet?"

"Maybe I have."

"You, you're goin' to see me through, aren't you?"

"Sure I'm goin' to see you through."

"You're sorta clever. Haven't you got some brass buttons on?"

"No, those are sunflowers."

"They're awful perty," said Robert.

"Yes, they're real sweet."

"Maybe you're a policeman."

"I may be, but what does all this mean?"

"Who's mean?" blustered Bob.

"Come right along with me—you can board with me for a while. The patrol wagon is just outside, below."

The words "patrol wagon" had an unbelievable sobering effect upon the young fellow. He cringed and drew back as if from a ghost. He looked about wildly, and questioned excitedly:

"Am I arrested?"

"You are."

It now suddenly dawned upon Robert's dazed sensibilities what the inevitable consequences would be should Grace hear of this escapade, and he replied feverishly:

"Don't arrest me—have a heart. I'm simply in a little tough luck—give me a boost this time and you'll not regret it."

"I hate to arrest you, but I'm compelled to do my duty."

"I've got money. I'll put up a cash bond. How, how much do you want?"

"Five hundred dollars," said McDuff.

"Here's the five hundred—are we square?"

"Yes, until tomorrow morning at ten o'clock. You report at the police station at ten."

"Don't I get a receipt for that five hundred?" asked Bob.

"Yes, if you want it."

"I want it, unless you want to call it square."

The policeman hastily wrote out the receipt, saying:

"No pussy-footin' goes in this case—too many people know about it."

"Very well, pard, I'll see you at ten o'clock tomorrow," replied Robert stoically.

The policeman turned to go, and as he did so, he scrutinized the wreckage more closely, saying:

"This certainly resembles the 'Feast of Belshazzar.'"

"If I have the money, what's the difference?" interposed Robert pertly.

"It isn't worrying me any, I assure you."

"Nor me," curtly answered Robert who was trying to assume an air of indifference.

Now the police were gone, and Robert had gone to the hotel management to put up enough money to pay all damages. He then wandered out into the street. It was near the break of day, and the eastern horizon was saffron. It would soon be aflame with the golden splendor of the rising sun. The air was refreshing and wholesome. But Robert was apathetic; he had a "brown paper" taste and a bulging headache. He was tired and sleepy. It was the cold, grey dawn of the morning after, and there was no time to waste; the newspaper reporters must be hushed up. Should a report of this orgy appear in any one of the metropolitan newspapers, it would completely destroy every vestige of a chance of Robert Tadmores marrying Grace Conkling. So he bitterly and cynically, but doggedly journeyed from newspaper office to news office in his determined effort to keep the account of "The Feast of Belshazzar" out of print. It was undeniably a long, tedious grind, and it cost him innumerable boxes of cigars and shekels untold, but he was successful in "fixing" and "salvaging" all the reporters of the various newspaper offices except those of "The Knickerbocker." He had purposely left Mr. Conkling's paper until the last, because the situation here was more delicate and more acute, and required more sagacity and shrewder diplomacy.

It was now near eight o'clock. In just one hour Mr. Conkling would be at his office. Matters must be fixed up before that time. Robert was feeling tough. His head was bursting. He went stumbling into the first drug store that he came to and ordered a bromo seltzer, after which he rested thirty minutes and then drank a cup of coffee and ate two pieces of toast.

Robert now felt considerably refreshed, but he dreaded the ordeal before him. He entered the offices of "The Knickerbocker" with a nervous, anxious, worried, stealthy look. He fully realized that a slip here would be fatal. It would wreck his every plan, present and future.

Few of the employees were on duty; in fact, none save Dudley and the two night reporters. Robert had not gone more than a dozen paces down the central aisle when he met Dudley Longden, face to face. A look of consternation, if

not desperation, flitted quickly across his countenance as he exclaimed:

"Why, Dud! I'd forgotten about your being here."

"Bob, how are you, old scout?"

"I'm all right, I guess."

"Where did you come from? Where are you going to? What are you doing?"

Robert paid no attention to any of these questions and queried:

"You still work here, Dud?"

"Yes."

"This is certainly an aristocratic place."

"You look worried, Bob—what's the trouble? Are you sick?"

"Oh, I guess I've got a bursting headache."

"That's sure too bad, Bob. Are you in New York to stay?"

"No, I'm still at Belmont."

"I suppose you like it."

"Oh yes, it's great—nobody goes there, you know, but the swellest people."

"Are you still crazy about athletics, Bob?"

"Why not? An athlete has a higher rating than a college professor."

"You came down to the theater?"

"Yes, and to attend to some business. I see that you still wear the pin—have you been true?"

"I certainly have—and you?"

As Robert was about to answer, he threw his coat back revealing his pin which was made of gold instead of wire and was set with diamonds. The two now looked keenly into each other's eyes, after which they gripped each other's right hand just so, and shook three times, just so, after which Robert spoke in a more confidential voice:

"Dudley, I'm in trouble."

"In trouble?"

"Yes. Last night I gave a banquet here for some of the Belmont boys, and we had champagne. Unfortunately all of us got drunk and we upset the tables and broke half the china and cut glass. The hotel management got excited and called the police."

"That's easy; simply take your medicine by paying your fine and then the pain and mortification will all be over. It's

just like having the toothache: the sooner you have it out, the sooner your trouble will be over."

"I'm going to do that—yes, I'm willing to have the tooth pulled, but that isn't what is worrying me. These newspaper reporters! the sons-of-guns are just like turkey buzzards in search of carrion."

"Still no one knows you here."

"Yes they do. Don't you fool yourself. I wouldn't have Grace know about this jamboree for all the coal mines in Ohio."

"Grace?"

"Yes, Grace Conkling—doesn't Charles Conkling own and manage 'The Knickerbocker'?"

"Yes, he does. I now see your point, Bob."

"Grace is my sweetheart."

"Yes, I see, but what is your plan?"

"To keep the report of 'The Feast of Belshazzar,' as the police term it, out of the newspapers."

"Change your name."

"Like a fool I told the police my name when I was half drunk."

"But I should think that you could glibly and shrewdly and personally explain the escapade to Grace before it appears in the papers. I believe she'd forgive and forget."

"But we had some dancing girls, too. Grace might 'stand for' the champagne, and the police, and the fine, and the broken china, but I'm sure she'd never stand for those skirt dancers."

"Have you seen the other papers?"

"I have them all 'fixed' except this one."

"Mr. Conkling will be here in fifteen minutes—I'll speak to him about it, and rest assured that I'll do all I can for you, Bob."

"You fool you, what do you mean? Don't you know that my whole purpose is to keep the report of this affair from the Conkling family?"

"Oh, I see. I thought you merely wanted to keep it from Grace."

"Why don't you know that Mr. Conkling would tell his daughter?"

"I guess you are right. I don't know what to suggest, Bob. Have you talked with the night reporters?"

"No. Are they the fellows to 'fix' here?"

"Yes, but I fear, Bob, you can't do anything with them. They're independent whelps."

"I've got five hundred dollars in gold if necessary."

"I'm sure you couldn't buy them."

"I've bought twenty-six of them in less than five hours."

"I'll find out which reporter has written the affair up, and then I'll introduce you."

"Now, Dudley, I'm in serious trouble and I want and must have all your influence in this matter. If you ever intend to give an unfortunate fellow a boost, do it right now. It would simply kill me if Grace should hear of this."

"Bob, I'm willing to do all that I can, but I'll frankly confess to you that I haven't a particle of influence with these reporters. I'll see what I can do."

Dudley went hastily to one of the front offices, spoke to a night reporter, asked two or three questions, but the reporter shook his head decisively, coldly turned his back upon Dudley and continued his work. Dudley returned to where Robert was standing, saying:

"He refuses to see you, Bob."

"Refuses to see me? The devil and Tom Walker! What does this little egotist feed upon that he should be so dictatorial? How much money has he got that he should be so independent? He's a snob and a smarty—I'll just interview the gentleman, anyway."

"I don't believe you'll have any luck, Bob."

Robert paid no attention to Dudley's words of warning, boldly approached the reporter with his customary nonchalance and said defiantly:

"I'm looking for the reporter who has written up 'The Feast of Belshazzar.'"

"I am he."

"Have a cigar."

"No, I thank you."

"Did you ever unintentionally get into an unholy mix-up?"

"No sir."

"Did you ever regret anything when it was too late to mend it?"

"No sir."

"Would you help a man up when he's down?"

"No sir."

"Did you ever act a d—n fool?"

"No sir."

"I'll have to pronounce you a liar—you're acting a d—n fool right now."

"Anyway, I can't be bought and sold."

"Did you ever forget anything?"

"Possibly."

"If you'll forget—forget, I say, to put that 'write up' in the paper, I'll count you out—"

"Stop right there—you haven't got enough money."

"Let me finish, if you please, before you interrupt me. I'll count you out, I say, five hundred dollars in gold which you can keep or turn over to the management, provided you withhold the source of supply."

"You take that up with Mr. Conkling."

"Hasn't this newspaper any space to sell?"

"Most certainly 'The Knickerbocker' has space to sell. Who said it hadn't?"

"Nobody. I've been having a hard time, it seems, in making you understand me and my purposes. Now, I wish to buy that space where you propose putting you're 'write up' of 'The Feast of Belshazzar.'"

"That space isn't for sale, if you please."

"I thought you said it was."

"I didn't say it. You go talk to Mr. Conkling."

"I'm not going to talk to Mr. Conkling—if you want to make five hundred dollars for your newspaper, here's your chance; ten moments hence it will be everlastingly too late. What say you?"

"Talk to Mr. Conkling."

"I have no intention whatsoever of taking this matter up with Mr. Conkling, but if you wish to earn five hundred or a thousand for your paper, all you have to do is to lose—lose, I say—your 'write up.' No other newspaper in New York City will have this bit of sensationalism in it."

"How do you know?"

"I know."

"Have you arranged with all of them?"

"I'm simply stating what I know to be a fact—it isn't necessary for me to explain or say anything additional."

"Mr. Conkling has tried to publish a fair, unbiased, clean newspaper, and I think he has succeeded fairly well."

"If I were going to pass judgment, I'd say that 'The Knickerbocker' was a barnstorming, sensational, yellow newspaper if it publishes this 'write up' of 'The Feast of Belshazzar' when all the other newspapers of the city have agreed not to publish it."

"I'll speak to Mr. Conkling relative to your charge of sensationalism, and I'll mention, too, your offer of a thousand dollars if the write up is 'lost.'"

"You say one word to Mr. Conkling regarding this conversation and you're a dead man."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, indeed. I'm a desperate man, and I mean exactly what I say, and I'm not going to be trifled with."

"You are bothering me, so allow me to bid you an affectionate goodbye."

As Robert turned to go, he reiterated:

"Remember what I said to you relative to mentioning our conversation to Mr. Conkling. If you have any sense and know what is good for you, you'll keep quiet."

Robert's temper was foaming. He was angry through and through. His plan was about to miscarry and be frustrated by a pompous, little, egotistical upstart. He was determined. He was desperate. He turned viciously upon his heels and briskly walked to the rear of the room. The pressman had just entered. Robert accosted him. They conversed earnestly and confidentially for several moments. Soon the pressman queried in a low voice:

"So you belong to the Printer's Union?"

"I do," said Tadmire.

"Where?" asked the pressman.

"Waterloo, Ohio."

"Well, I'll tell you, Tadmire, we printers have got to stand together or we're lost."

"That's just it, that's just it. These capitalists will quietly wreck our unions, and put our leaders in jail, and reduce our wages one-half, if they get a half a chance."

"Are you in good standing?" asked the man.

"Yes, but my card's in my other clothes," said Bob.

"That's all right—don't trouble yourself. I know an honest fellow when I see him—I can tell by his eyes."

"I certainly thank you."

"I pronounce you true blue. I'm for you."

"I'll certainly do a like favor for you sometime."

"I used to be a boy myself, and I sowed a few. There's absolutely no use in punishing a boy for what he regrets."

"There, you hit the nail on the head squarely, squarely on the head, I say."

"It'll not go in, I tell you—it'll not go in, even though I lose my job."

"I certainly thank you a thousand times for your consideration."

"Depend upon me," exclaimed the printer with emphasis.

"Goodby and good luck," answered Robert triumphantly.

The pressman simply waved his hand as a token of his regard. Robert now was jubilant. He had convinced the pressman that he belonged to the Printer's Union which, with an ardent union man, goes farther than money. Robert hastened away. He wished to be gone when Mr. Conkling arrived. In truth Mr. Conkling would have been there before all of Robert's plans had been matured, had he not been late in arriving this morning. Robert chuckled audibly as he walked deliberately down the street. His headache was gone, his spirits were buoyant—he was feeling fine. He muttered to himself:

"Who says that I'm not a strategist? Foch isn't in it. Who says that I can't finesse? Who wants to match wits with one, Sir Robert Tadmore?"

The account of "The Feast of Belshazzar" did not appear in "The Knickerbocker" that evening, nor did it appear in any of the other metropolitan papers. Robert was hilarious and he jollified by drinking six cocktails at one sitting. It had been an expensive escapade, but why should he care? He had money and he had triumphed.

However the night reporter of "The Knickerbocker" was watching matters. He noticed that his 'write up' had been omitted, and he asked Mr. Conkling "Why?" Mr. Conkling, of course, could not answer. Then the reporter recited his conversation with Robert that morning. Mr. Conkling listened attentively. All the while he was very still and very thoughtful. He looked, all the while, straight ahead of him and down, but he said nothing. To him it was a painful rehearsal; however, he wanted to know the facts. He understood, but he did not make any comments. When the recital was over, Mr. Conkling thanked the reporter and courteously dismissed him

with what purported to be a smile of gratitude, but it was, in truth, a smile of pain. He picked up a newspaper and pretended to be reading, however he was not reading, he was thinking.

Mr. Conkling was always diplomatic. He thoroughly realized that generally it is wisest, when strained relations have arisen, to say nothing; that often a person can do more indirectly to avert a catastrophe than he can do directly. Drastic measures usually cause friction in family affairs, and generally they do not secure results. As a rule, radical and high-handed methods in love affairs cause resentment, an unyielding determination, and a disregard of parental authority. So the father said nothing to the daughter regarding the young man's escapade; but silently down in the secret recesses of his heart, he henceforth detested Robert Tadmire most bitterly and most uncompromisingly.

XVI

MRS. LONGDEN

Susan Bradstreet was still working at the job that Robert procured for her, but she was unhappy, and part of the time she was in tears. Her speckled trout had snapped the line and triumphantly sailed away. Robert had not acted as she expected. Heretofore, she had gone fishing only in the rural creeks where the fish are small and easy to catch; but she had much yet to learn about fishing de luxe—about fishing for trout in the city streams where the human tides ebb and flow. Here the fish are game and uncertain, resourceful and skilled in finesse, and you are not sure of your catch until the marriage vows have been spoken—not until death itself has claimed your fish. Then and then only are you actually sure that you had caught him or her.

Susan had tried on various occasions to interest Dudley's affections, but somehow they had been winter-killed, and they could not be revived by the sunshine of love or the showers of kindness. One day she became bolder and queried frankly:

"Dudley, don't you like me any more?"

"Susan, Robert is your chocolate drop."

"Not any more."

"Then it's no fault of yours."

"But I like you better, Dudley."

"Since when?"

"Oh, for a long time, Dudley."

"Not when Robert's around."

"He goes with all the girls, and I want a fellow who isn't so generous or so accommodating with his affections."

"Susan, once we were sweethearts. I loved you. You coldly and cruelly turned your back upon me. My love was unrequited. I suffered, my feelings were wounded. I was overwhelmed with chagrin. You chose Robert. I can't see wherein I'm under any obligations to you now."

"Dudley, have you never made a mistake? Have you never done anything that you regretted?"

"Yes, I have many times; but should Robert call upon you this evening, I have every reason to believe that you would choose Barabas—pardon the illustration, I did not intend to be sacrilegious."

"No, you are mistaken, Dudley. I am a wiser woman than formerly."

"In other words you'll make sure the next time that you're going to get Robert before you quit me?"

"No, not that, Dudley."

"I'm sorry, Susan, but my self-respect forbids. Henceforth we can be no more than friends, so goodbye and good luck."

Susan hastened to her apartment, bowed her head upon her desk and wept bitterly. The sun had gone down; the day was cold and dark and dreary. She was heart-broken. Her sky was overcast, and her future was a house of gloom.

Dudley, too, was very sad. He battled between love and self-respect throughout the balance of the day. However, he said nothing to anyone. As usual, he stoically endured his heart-aches without a murmur, but he had made it a steadfast rule of his life never to allow the same person to snub him a second time; so he remained obdurate, although his heart was crying out for love and sympathy and companionship.

The days ambled quickly past. Dudley and Anna gradually became warm friends, but "union" was always a dangerous subject—as deadly and as dangerous as nitro-glycerine—a subject which each had wisely learned to avoid. A discussion of the weather, the styles, motoring, clothes, the late war, the theatre were always welcome subjects, but unions never.

It was a sweltering evening in midsummer. Everybody was trying to cool off internally and externally. Dudley and Anna had journeyed to a nearby soda fountain. After they were seated, Dudley queried pleasantly and courteously:

"Anna, what shall we drink?"

"A phosphate for me," replied Anna briefly.

"There isn't any nourishment in a phosphate," said Dudley.

"It isn't nourishment that I want—I want a cooler, I want a reducer, I want to be refreshed."

"Then give us two lemon phosphates," commanded Dudley, looking up indifferently at the waiter who was standing at attention at his elbow.

When the waiter had gone, Anna spoke complimentary:

"Dudley, you look as fresh as a morning-glory this evening."

"As fresh as a morning-glory this evening?" he inquired.

"Then, you look as fresh as a four-o'clock this evening—how do you like that, Mr. Perspicuity?"

"That's better, Anna, and I thank you for the compliment. You remind me, Anna, of a jelly roll all covered with sugar," replied Dudley with an infectious smile.

"Of course a boy would always illustrate with something to eat," said Anna.

"Why not, when I never did get enough jelly roll?"

"I guess all of us illustrate and give as presents those things that appeal to us most."

"Yes, my little brother sent me a little tin horse and wagon last Christmas."

"Now, according to his way of thinking, that was the most appropriate and biggest thing in the world that he could buy for ten cents."

"Sure. Anna, let's buy us a lunch at a delicatessen and go to the park and have a picnic all of our own."

"That certainly is a delightful suggestion and it gets my vote," she replied.

Accordingly, they bought lunch and meandered out to Central Park where myriads of people were fanning, sweating, complaining, promenading and resting. They joined this motley crowd, but they were so interested in each other that they did not complain of the heat or the weather. They were seated upon a settee laughing and cooing when Anna suddenly queried:

"Dudley, why do you wear that pin?"

"Oh, it's a crazy notion of mine," replied Dudley indifferently.

"What does it mean? G. F.?"

"It's an old wire pin which a young people's society at Waterloo adopted."

"But what does it mean?" she insisted.

"Nothing."

"Dudley, you know better," answered Anna tartly, and anger flashed from her eyes.

"Nothing of interest to you, Anna."

"Now, Dudley, if you love me you'll tell me."

"It's a little secret, Anna."

"That's what I know; that's the reason I want to know."

"You wouldn't understand."

"I'm too dense?"

"No, not that; but, Anna, my reputation is at stake—I'm in honor bound to keep this little secret of this little society."

"You provoke me, Dudley. You don't love me," answered Anna caustically as she arrogantly tossed her head and turned her back upon Dudley.

"Please don't act that way, Anna. Please don't insist upon a thing that means much to me and nothing to you."

"But it is a matter of interest to me, and I do insist upon it, Dudley Longden."

"Would you have me break a most solemn vow for the sake of your idle curiosity?"

"I would if you love me. If you don't love me, don't answer."

"Is it not enough that I assure you that it is of no consequence to you?"

"Dudley, don't tell me if you don't love me."

Dudley was now helplessly in the hands of the Philistine. Delilah was mistress of the situation. She seemed to have hypnotic power over him and he could not break the spell. He answered humbly, but guiltily:

"'G' stands for 'Germany,' and 'F' stands for 'First.'"

"Oh, I see—thank you."

Dudley hung his head. He was now chagrined, provoked, angry—angry at himself, at Anna. The secret was out. He had been worked. He had deliberately done that which his mother had cautioned him not to do. The joy had suddenly gone out of his life. He was now helplessly in the hands of one who was, at best, a doubtful friend. The conversation was henceforth labored. Delilah had scored. She was silently jubilant. She had tangled the fish in her net. Yes, Sampson was helpless—as helpless as a kite in a storm. Anna was exultant. She now had a leverage whereby she could compel his love, or compel him to join the Printer's Union. The sultry atmosphere had suddenly become chill. They did not tarry. In a very little while they went toward home, but the homeward journey was not unlike that of a funeral party. Their goodbys were brief and curt, if not frigid.

On the following morning at about ten o'clock, a lady whose hair was streaked with grey entered the vestibule of "The Knickerbocker" building. She was modest if not diffident. She had a noble mien; a clear, charming voice; large,

lustrous eyes; and gentle, kindly ways. She was a perfect example of long-suffering motherhood. Her dress was very plain and bespoke an honest effort to be respectable with the expenditure of but little money. In a way it was sad. This mother had worked and toiled and struggled all her days. She had traveled the stony, dusty, unlevel road of parsimony without a murmur and without a sigh; so naturally her countenance had been scarred with many wrinkles, but her eyes were luminous with goodness, and her countenance was lighted with kindness and hopefulness. Although she had reared a family of five, which is a task that is more trying than raising a family of robins near a family of kittens, and more arduous than weeding onion seed sprouts, still she was not jaded. A freshness that was fed by the springs of good cheer suffused her countenance. She had kept sweet when sailing upon stormy seas.

But now she had, for a little while, quit the inconsequential, circumscribed world in which she had toiled and striven, and had entered a great metropolis where dress is the deciding factor in the measure of man or a woman. Her husband had demanded a strict accounting for every egg and every quarter pound of butter that had been marketed, and he had always been exacting to the last penny. But somehow this lady had accumulated a few pennies here and a few pennies there until she had saved enough to take her to her first born. She had now come to surprise him—him who had not only been absent from home two long, lonesome years, but had been driven from home by an avaricious, unreasonable father.

The only reason now that Mr. Longden had not objected to his wife's going, was the paramount fact that he had not been asked to defray the expenses. He had gone upon the assumption that Dudley was furnishing the money, which was the one and only thing that concerned him supremely. Dudley had heretofore sent his mother various sums for her own personal use, some of which she had steadfastly saved with the one idea in mind of some day visiting her beloved son.

Mrs. Longden had attracted considerable attention as she had walked down the street. Her shoes were cumbersome. Her bonnet was antiquated. Her dress swept the sidewalk—it was painfully plain and of the cheapest calico. In fact, all of her clothes had been out of style at least four years, but they were neat and trim and clean. Any boy would have

been proud of such a mother. True nobility is not a matter of dress; it is enthroned in the soul, and tempers the thoughts and actions; it gives a touch of gentility to the voice; it asserts itself in loftiness of purpose and charity for all mankind. True nobility is rarely found in the whirl of so-called select society where snobbishness and insincerity flourish; it is found in the humble cottage, along the byways, away from the eddying crowds, away from the haunts of men.

The mother was accompanied by her two youngest daughters who were eight and ten respectively. As soon as she entered "The Knickerbocker" offices, she was seized with a feeling of embarrassment. However, she advanced with queenly dignity to the first desk and questioned the gentleman in charge in a voice as charming and as musical as the song of the nightingale:

"Can you tell me, please, whether Dudley Longden works here?"

"Yes, ma'am, he does—just step to the workroom back of the offices there."

Dudley was now in charge of the job-printing department. He had heard and he knew his mother's voice as soon as she spoke. He hastened to greet and embrace her. Big tears came into his eyes and trickled down his cheeks as he approached. He was deeply moved. The surprise was complete. He tried to be brave, but when he spoke there was a sob in his voice:

"Why, mother! when and how did you come?"

"We just arrived, Dudley."

"Why didn't you tell me? I would have met you at the station."

"We wanted to surprise you."

"You have certainly done it."

"You're looking so well, Dudley."

"Yes, I'm quite well, mother—and you?"

"I'm always well, Dudley; I haven't time to get sick."

"Mother, I want you to meet Mr. Conkling, my employer."

Dudley forthwith started rapidly and proudly toward Mr. Conkling's office, followed at a distance by his delightful mother. When the mother caught up with the son, Dudley addressed his employer nervously:

"Mr. Conkling, this is my mother."

"Mrs. Longden, I'm certainly glad to see you. I suppose you're as proud of Dudley as he is of you."

"Oh, of course," replied Mrs. Longden enthusiastically but unobtrusively.

Grace was in the private room adjoining her father's public office, but the door was open. She could hear and see all that transpired. She was her father's private secretary when she was not in college. Her attitude now was snobbish, condescending and arrogant. She did not consider Dudley Longden in her class. He was scarcely more than an animal that does menial work. He was her father's flunkey. Dudley was never stylishly attired, never even well dressed. Grace was sure that she never could endure him. Her one ambition was to marry an up-to-date young man with plenty of aggressiveness and "oodles" of vivacity. So she naturally regarded Dudley and his mother as inconsequential. Mrs. Longden continued:

"But, Mr. Conkling, do you have to punish him often?"

"Every day," chuckled the editor.

"No wonder he looks so well."

"Yes, spankings always make boys healthy and good-looking," replied the editor jocularly.

"We've been awfully lonesome at home since Dudley went away," replied the mother sadly.

"I presume; still he has a much better opportunity here, Mrs. Longden."

"Oh, for his own sake, I would not have him come back home."

"We sometimes scold and rant and—"

"Certainly, that's what I want you to do when he doesn't do just right; however, Dudley says you've treated him like a father."

"Well, Mrs. Longden, I can trust Dudley—I've tried him out thoroughly. He's honorable and I can depend upon him, and that kind of a boy stands high in my estimation."

"If he ever gets lazy and shiftless, Mr. Conkling, you punish him; for he wasn't raised that way."

"He has worried me at times, Mrs. Longden: he has been too studious, too much inclined to overwork and overdo. I've been fearful lest he might break his health."

Dudley knew that Mr. Conkling was a very busy man, and that every moment meant much to him, so he interposed:

"Mother, we'll see Mr. Conkling again—he's always busy at this time of day."

"Dudley, you'll probably want to show your mother Greater New York, so you're at liberty to take a two weeks' vacation on full pay."

"I certainly thank you, Mr. Conkling, but I don't want a two weeks' vacation—I couldn't enjoy that much of a vacation; I'd get restless and peevish, but I'd certainly appreciate it if I might have the rest of the day off."

"Dudley takes as much interest in this printing establishment as I do. We're very much alike; neither of us thinks that the establishment would run two weeks without us."

"I hope he isn't an egotist."

"Not at all, but he's interested and wants to see the boss succeed—not a bad quality, Mrs. Longden."

"No, that isn't a bad quality, Mr. Conkling. While I think of it, I wish to thank you many times for your interest in Dudley."

"Mrs. Longden, every trustworthy boy is entitled to a chance, and I'm very glad indeed that I was able to give Dudley a chance. I believe that both of us have profited by it."

"There's where Dudley's father was at fault."

"I should judge so, else Dudley never would have left his mother. A boy never leaves his mother unless there's some mighty good reason."

"Well, I'll be here in the morning, Mr. Conkling—goodby!" interposed Dudley as he, followed by his mother and two sisters, started away.

"Goodby, Dudley," answered Mr. Conkling considerably.

Mrs. Longden had come to stay a month, so Dudley at once concluded that it would be cheaper and more satisfactory to rent a small apartment where they could do light housekeeping and be by themselves. This he did and, after the baggage was delivered and assorted, many were the questions that Dudley asked regarding Collie, the old sugar camp, the horses, the apple trees, the wild flowers, the old swimmin' hole, the neglected cemetery, and the slippery-elm tree.

XVII

VACATION DAYS

Robert was spending his vacation in New York. The reason was plain; he wished to be near Grace Conkling with whom he was madly in love. Robert had no occupation, so he could spend his summer vacation as well in one place as another. He was idling his life away, dissipating his energies, squandering his patrimony. He had no high ambitions, no lofty ideals, no settled purpose in life. His one all-consuming passion was pleasure—gratification. Sometimes it was wholesome, sometimes unwholesome. Like a skiff on the sea, he was drifting. Like wreckage, he was floating with the tide.

Grace, too, was captivated. Any girl is captivated when her beau ideal has a train of admirers. Under such circumstances the most commonplace man becomes the most desirable of men.

Robert's toilet was his stock in trade. It cost him immeasurably, but he was sure that the investment paid. He shaved, took a cold bath, a brisk rub and a two-mile walk each morning. Each evening before going out he took a run, a hot bath, and a glass or two of high-grade champagne. He spent some of his time at the gym; but he passed the greater portion of his waking existence with Grace, playing golf, boating, picnicing, autoing, or at the theatre.

Mr. Conkling had not yet seen young Tadmor. He had no desire to see him. The "Feast of Belshazzar" had told him enough. If you show an expert botanist a leaf, he can tell you the name of the tree—Mr. Conkling was the botanist; "The Feast of Belshazzar" was the leaf; the botanist knew the name of the tree, at least he knew enough about the tree to form some very pertinent conclusions. Naturally, Mr. Conkling was emphatically opposed to Robert and he had decided if possible to keep him out of his family circle; however, the situation was delicate and it might become acute. It certainly was going to require the most subtle sort of diplomacy, for his daughter was decided, very decided, in her

ways. Grace was not especially self-opinionated; but she naturally was a strong, decisive personality, all of which she probably inherited from her father. An emphatic command from the father that Mr. Tadmor should not call again, might cause Grace to defend her lover stoutly and vigorously, and might cause her to assert her independence. Such a course would undeniably be unwise and undiplomatic; so the father decided to work out a more sagacious plan.

Grace was a delightful young lady, almost royal in the charm of her presence and the graciousness of her dignity. She was a social queen, keen-witted, subtle, independent and resourceful. However, she was intensely feminine, and was swayed by all those little attentions and courtesies which usually captivate the feminine heart. Besides, Robert Tadmor knew the art of winning a girl better than he knew trigonometry, and he did not hesitate to resort to any and every expedient.

While Grace was acting as private secretary to her father, she was compelled to observe the same hours as the other employees; but when she wished a day off—which was frequently—a promenade in the yard, arm in arm, with her father; a rearrangement of his necktie; the pinning of a buttonhole bouquet to the lapel of his coat; or a magnetic, imploring smile, face to face, always secured the desired result. All these points of attack usually caused the father to surrender unconditionally. This continued indulgence was probably the cause of that independence which manifested itself semi-occasionally in the daughter's speech and actions.

Thus Grace and Robert whiled the summer away, motoring and playing golf. They had visited every point of interest and eaten at every hotel of merit within a radius of two hundred miles. Day after day they leisurely boated and dreamily drifted up and down the picturesque Hudson in the vicinity of the tragedy of Rip VanWinkle. Each and every evening they played a round of golf which was followed by dinner at the Country Club. After dinner they played cards or promenaded in the parks. Robert must have said to Grace—at least he must have thought it: "Wheresoever thou goest, I will go—thy God shall be my God, thy people shall be my people," for they were together incessantly.

Now summer was almost gone. Grace was beginning to tire of Robert. He had pushed his suit too vigorously for his

own good. He did not have the versatility, the resourcefulness, the knowledge, the necessary amount of travel to entertain a hustling, wide-awake American girl every day in the week for three long months. If it takes a Cleopatra to captivate a Roman General, it certainly takes the versatility of a Theodore Roosevelt to entertain a breezy, shrewd, intellectual, sun-tanned, New York girl. Robert had been weighed in the balance and found wanting. Grace had daily taken soundings in his brain, as they do in the caverns of the ocean; but her readings had disclosed nothing—nothing worth while, nothing but a disengaging shallowness, an uninviting emptiness, a capacious void. She had discovered nothing but an intense yearning for pleasure, of which she was now very weary. She had seen the dusty, barren, arid peaks of his intelligence, and they resembled the craters of extinct volcanoes—empty and desolate.

It was evening. Robert and Grace were taking dinner, as usual, at the Country Club. Grace seemed to be distressed, discontented. She interposed abruptly:

"Robert, I'm sick of squab, sherbets and wines—I long for the simple life, for a rural retreat. I'm weary of people—I want to be alone, and live on toast and tea for a fortnight."

"Grace, what do you mean? What have I done that you should talk this way? What have I not done, I say, that you should wish me away?"

Of course, after Robert had entertained her so regally all summer, Grace could not tell him that she was disappointed in him, that she had read his soul and discovered that the creek of his mentality had gone dry, discovered that his ideas were feeble, insipid, meaningless. So Grace answered more hopefully when she saw that Robert was construing her remarks personally:

"I do not wish you away, Robert."

"I could not tell, of course, whom you meant or what you meant."

"Did you ever feel disgusted? Did you ever have nausea? Perhaps I'm not well—perhaps you've entertained too well."

"Rather, I should think that I had failed."

"Have you ever been lonesome when in a crowd? Have you ever longed to be with a plain, honest-to-goodness person like Mrs. Longden?"

"Mrs. Longden?"

"Yes, Mrs. Longden. She is in New York now, you know, and she is such an honest, cheerful, noble, dignified old lady that I like her. If I were in trouble, I would not go to the Four Hundred for help—I'd go to such people as Mrs. Longden."

"I'd almost forgotten her, but I've always regarded her as a very, very ordinary woman."

"Nevertheless, she is as true as the mountains, as kindly as a ray of sunshine in winter, and as lovable as a tulip in spring—and what else is worth while?"

"So she's your ideal?"

"To be brief, I'm tired of the foam and palaver of fashionable society."

"I don't know just what you're driving at, Grace."

"The simple life, Robert."

"The simple life?"

"Where friends are true, and food is plain, and work is honorable."

"Have you been disappointed? Are you soured on life? Has your confidence been misplaced?"

"No," answered Grace who did not have the courage to tell Robert frankly that she was disappointed in him.

"But you have not enjoyed the summer?"

"Robert, it has been charming, delightful; but the wasted moments! the lost opportunities!"

"Grace, these are life to me. Pleasure and gratification are joys unspeakable to my soul."

"Robert, your ideals have poisoned barbs."

"You are talking in riddles this evening, Grace—I do not understand."

"This is what I mean, Robert; summer is over, golden moments have been ruthlessly wasted, college days are near and I am glad."

"You wish to get back to your studies?"

"I do. I never could live an idle life. It disintegrates the soul and demoralizes the moral fibre."

"I too believe that I feel better when I'm on the football squad, where my bill-of-fare is beef and beans and cheese; but I also believe that play and pleasure and gratification prolong life."

"Understand me, Robert; I say that we are to be commended when we make pleasure the dessert course of life, but that we

are to be pitied when we make it the meat and the salad courses, too."

"Longevity certainly demands cheerfulness, and nothing promotes cheerfulness so much as pleasure."

"True; however, too much of it enervates while too little makes life a dreary waste; so take your choice. Robert, I'm convinced that I've had too much—I'm pampered. I need more work, simpler food, and a few unpretentious friends."

"Then I shall order tea and toast for you, or ham and eggs?"

"Toast and tea, if you please," responded Grace vigorously.

"Are you joking?"

"No, that's a bona fide order."

"Why not order a dish of blue sky and a bowl of sunbeams?"

"I'll take toast and tea this time, after which we shall play two more rounds of golf—I need lots of fresh air, lots of exercise to drive these depressing sensations away."

"You shall most assuredly have your wish," said Robert.

"Papa said they were going to raise the annual membership fee in this Country Club to five thousand dollars."

"Good! That'll be just fine. I'm in favor. I vote 'yes.' It'll make it so much more exclusive."

"I'm opposed; I vote 'no.' Exclusive people are snobbish, and snobbish people are small peaches, and green."

"Not necessarily."

"My observation informs me that it is necessarily true."

"Then the jury disagrees," laughed Robert boisterously.

"Only ten more days until we'll be back to grand old Belmont."

"I wish I could say honestly: 'Grand old Belmont.'"

"What then would you say?" asked Grace.

"I'd say, 'Detestable, old Belmont,'" said Robert bitterly.

"How awful! Do you so soon forget the many jolly times that we had there?"

"Have you not learned that every rose has its thorns?" smiled Robert incredulously.

"Sure! That is life—college life, real life, everyday life."

"Not so, Grace; this summer right here in New York has been a rose without any thorns. That saying is untrue—I quoted it as a joke."

"Maybe the thorns are yet to come," she said.

"I hope not," replied Robert.

"I thought you enjoyed college life? I thought you liked to play football."

"I do, but I hate study."

"Robert, it's a sin to waste the golden moments—life is so short, so sweet, so precious."

"I never did like drudgery."

"My dear boy, every professor, every senator, every man of consequence has either endured or he is enduring days—yes, weeks and months and years—of drudgery and hard work."

"I believe you are mistaken, Grace. So many people go sailing so serenely through life that I'm sure there is not a cloud in their sky."

"If you'd take a peep behind the scenes, you'd change your mind. But, I admit, study is a great pleasure to me; I enjoy it."

"Here we are. Ham and eggs, and toast and tea—I'll divide with you; you ought to have something to eat besides moonshine," he urged.

"No, I thank you—toast and tea sounds good to me."

XVIII

STRANDED

The awful stillness that brooded over the Longden farm was not unlike that that hovers over the desert at nightfall, since Mrs. Longden and her two youngest daughters had been sojourning in New York. The two remaining children, who were respectively twelve and fifteen, were now alone with their father; and naturally they longed to see their mother, longed for someone to caress them and sympathize with them. The children were precocious beyond their years, probably an inheritance from their mother. They could scarcely endure their exacting, critical, grouchy, inconsiderate father. His very presence gave them a chill. He compelled them to tend the garden, to milk the cows, to prepare his meals, to make the butter, to pull the weeds; in fact, they had nothing to do but work.

Their mother had now been gone thirty days. The awful lonesomeness of the place haunted the children. They decided that they could endure it no longer, and they stealthily began planning a trip to New York. First, they wished to see their mother, and second, they wished to see what laid beyond the encircling hills. Sometime since, they had commenced accumulating money by abstracting twenty-five cents each time they marketed the produce; but they became impatient and anxious to go, and they pronounced this plan too slow. It would take too long. They could not wait. They must find some speedier method of accumulating money.

One bright September morning Mr. Longden put the children to work in the fields, and started to a sale some five miles distant. The children decided that the opportune time had arrived. So, as soon as their father was gone, they commenced corralling the hens, and noisy was the cackling and many were the squawks that arose from the Longden barnyard. They hastily caught sixty of the nicest, fattest fowls, hitched "Old Dobbins" to the spring wagon and soon they were jogging along the road toward Waterloo. "Old Dobbins" made

the trip in record time. He certainly exceeded the speed limit. Never before had he gone so fast, because the Longden children used a green beech "persuader" freely and continually and effectively. As soon as they reached the village of Waterloo, they nervously sold the fowls and pocketed the money. They then hesitated for a second, but for a second only—their consciences had rebelled, had pronounced their course wrong and dishonorable. They had never done anything like this before; but they quickly decided that it was the lesser of the two evils: the father's injustice, and the stealing of the fowls. So they quickly tied up the lines, faced "Old Dobbins" toward home, hit him a sharp cut with the whip, and off he started at breakneck speed. They then quickly bought their tickets for New York, boarded the first train which, fortunately, came in about ten moments; and soon they were speeding away through a country which they had hitherto not known; but it was a country which seemed to them to be laden with wonders unbelievable.

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Robert and Grace were back at Belmont. The greetings of old friends, the echo of college halls, the lectures of dignified professors, the humdrum routine of study, the charm of sorority life; all these appealed to Grace Conkling very forcibly. Robert Tadmire enjoyed the athletic and social phases of university life, but the monotonous routine of study sounded a strident, discordant note in his nature and actually made his college days painful to him.

Robert and Grace promenaded incessantly in spite of the ridicule and taunts which are always hurled at a pair of college lovers. They were out driving one fine evening soon after college resumed. Robert had excused his autocratic chauffeur for the evening, and was doing the driving himself. He was a fast, if not reckless driver. For some unaccountable reason the lights would not burn, and darkness was hastily drawing its mantel over the earth. Robert was speeding, trying to make Belmont before it was pitch dark. He was sure that he could avoid the police even though it was dark, by creeping down a side street that ran near the garage; however he was driving too fast for the late eventide. He came to a turn in the road before he was aware of it, and he went into

the side ditch, through the barbed wire fence, and over into a cornfield. Grace was frightened. She was as white as a ghost, but fortunately no one was hurt. Robert enjoyed the thrill of hairbreadth escapes. Frequently he flirted with danger and laughed. The glass in the windshield was shattered and broken into a thousand pieces which were thrown into the hair, ears and mouths of the occupants. The only thing that prevented their being sawed in two was the windshield frame which, fortunately, was strong enough to break the barbed wires. So luck was with them and they were spared.

The car was badly crippled. It was a wreck. It would not start. Two of the wheels were cupped, both axles were bent, and the engine had paralysis. However Robert was not worried; he chuckled because he enjoyed it. He went to a nearby farmhouse and telephoned his garage to come after the pieces and to come prepared to transport two passengers. He was some four miles out.

Grace's countenance remained palid, ghastly. She was very sober and very thoughtful, but she had nothing to say. She did not enjoy such escapades. She had never claimed to be a mountain climber or an adventuress, and she had no ambitions along these lines. That which Robert enjoyed, Grace had no relish for. He liked the thrill of excitement and enjoyed the unexpected. He enjoyed telling about it afterward and liked to be the center of attraction.

A week later the garage man rendered a bill for repairing the crippled car. It amounted to twelve hundred and thirty-six dollars. Money matters never worried Robert. He laughed, and he wrote the check for the amount while he laughed. He acted as though the pleasure was all his. Money to him was very much like the Mississippi that placidly flows on forever—it had never gone dry. However some three days later the garage man returned the check to Robert. On the back of it was the notation, "not paid for the want of funds." Robert was stunned, speechless. He stammered and scratched his head. He was embarrassed; the river had gone dry. He had not dreamed that this day would ever come. It was a rude awakening. A bankrupt spendthrift is always a pitiable sight. Failure is always sad, but it is unspeakably sad when a young man, who has never toiled, is compelled to toil for his daily bread. A half a million dollars had evaporated in three

years. Robert was penniless and helpless. He had forgotten how to work; he hated work. Oh, how galling the work-collar is to some people! Robert contemplated suicide. He did not think that he could endure the humiliation. He must choose between suicide and the disgrace of poverty, for he surely regarded poverty a disgrace. In truth, suicide is a disgrace and poverty is honorable, but Robert did not so regard them. If he chose suicide, he would not be here to endure the pain and the humiliation; if he chose poverty, he would not only have to give up the fast life that he enjoyed so much, but his downfall would be a general topic of conversation in and about Belmont. So the sky was dark and the clouds were ominous. The road was rough and night was coming on. Pleasure and dissipation had enervated his life, and now he was a financial wreck.

Finally a rift came in the clouds. He had friends—sure he had friends—why not use them? Do not your friends have a cash value? Was he not a famous athlete? Did his reputation not have a cash value? Most assuredly! First, he decided to cash in on his friends as an asset. They would lend him enough to tide him over the present crisis—perhaps good luck was awaiting him just around the corner. That's what he would do; he would borrow enough money of his fraternity brothers to pay the garage man. Optimism had triumphed. It generally triumphs during the many crises that punctuate the life of every spendthrift who never takes life seriously.

So Robert borrowed the money of his fraternity brothers and made the garage man's check good. But what was he going to do? His expenses were enormous. He must have additional aid forthwith. He had not a cent in his pocket. How evasive money is, when you have none! How it melts, when you have but little! It's like the iceman's cake of ice on a hot day in August—a twenty-five pound piece only weighs fifteen. Robert was sure that the sensations of being a pauper were disconcerting to say the least. He must have relief; so, he called three of his more intimate fraters into a conference saying:

"Fellows, I certainly appreciate your assistance thus far, and I wish to thank you; but if I continue in college I'll be compelled to have more money."

"More money?" questioned one of his friends abruptly.

"Yes, it takes lots of money—it takes a damned sight of money, I say, when you have none."

"We just let you have six hundred dollars," replied another of the fraternity brothers, and that's as much as some students spend in a whole year."

"True, but you would not permit such a fellow to be a member of your fraternity; in fact, the fellow who is not in a position to expend five thousand dollars a year would be blackballed, if he applied for admission to our fraternity, twenty-two times—you know we have just twenty-two members," replied Robert earnestly.

"It is quite true, I admit, that social renown is one of the prerequisites of our fraternity," answered the brother meekly.

"Besides, Jonesy, the six hundred dollars was to take care of a check which I had already issued—my honor and the reputation of our fraternity were at stake."

"But, Robert, you're going to be compelled to abridge expenditures."

"I'll quit college before I'll abridge expenditures."

"That would be unfortunate for you as well as our fraternity."

"Nevertheless, a leader of college society cannot suddenly abridge expenditures without exciting wonder and provoking slighting remarks," replied Robert forcibly.

"But, Robert, you must remember that all of us fellows are on an allowance, and that our monthly allowance is spent, sometimes, three months before we get it. Why don't you put your creditors off a month?"

"A month?"

"Why, certainly; I owe some bills that are a year and a half old, and I received a letter from a creditor just this morning, stating that he was sending my bill to father. You have to learn to finesse."

"Why should you care if he does send it to father? Let father pay it."

"Maybe you don't know father."

"Does he lecture you?"

"No, not exactly; however he does not hesitate to take the amount out of my next pay check, and he deducts interest for prepayment."

"Nothing wrong about that."

"I suppose you have ridden in an elevator that goes down so fast that it completely takes your breath."

"Yes."

"That's the effect that one of father's letters has upon you. For instance, here's one I got yesterday:

"William:

Draft enclosed for six hundred and fifty dollars, payable to Lawrence Bros., clothiers. They say that it has been owing eighteen months. If I receive two more letters of this character during your junior year, you can pack your trunk and find yourself a job,

Father."

"Slightly disconcerting? But he's lucid," interposed Robert with a smile.

"Oh, I never have any doubt as to father's meaning."

"His letters put a fellow to thinking, eh?"

"Father never bluffs, always says exactly what he means, calls a bulldog a bulldog, and he never changes his mind."

"Pardon me, fellows, but we're off the subject. I know that you have troubles, but mine are acute. You boys must be reimbursed for the six hundred that you advanced me," asserted Robert positively.

"Are you really a bankrupt, Robert?" queried one of the fraters pointedly.

"I'm compelled to admit the truth of it, fellows, although I regret to think of the humiliation of it."

"Is there no hope that you may some day recoup your losses?"

"There's absolutely no hope—I admit it with chagrin."

"It's certainly an unfortunate situation."

"But, understand me, I'm making you fellows my confidants, knowing that you will keep this an untold secret. If, however, it should in one way or another become generally known, I would quit college sometime between the first setting and the first rising sun," said Robert.

"Are my athletic achievements worth anything? Have they a cash value?" he continued.

"You possibly might secure a position with one of the minor league teams, but that would necessitate your leaving college."

"You don't get my meaning. The question that arises in my mind is this: would the students of Belmont contribute to a purse to be presented to me? Of course, you fellows would be compelled to scatter the propaganda and work out the plans."

"But how would you conceal your financial shipwreck? Everybody would know about it, should a public campaign for money be started."

"Understand me. You would do all this secretly and unknown to me. You would do it for the good of Belmont athletics, you know. I would be merely an innocent recipient, unaware of what was happening. The purse would simply be a token of appreciation for what I had done for Belmont, athletically."

"Nevertheless, it would be embarrassing for you, when it came to receiving it, for the presentation would need to be made publicly."

"Leave that to me. I'm sagacious enough, I think, to handle it."

"Of course in our campaign we could pretend that we were doubtful that you would receive the purse, inasmuch as you had plenty of money; but at the same time we could insist that the college, at least, owed it to you to make the offer."

"Now you have the idea. I wouldn't have Grace Conkling know of my financial condition for six purses."

"There's no need of her knowing it; in fact, there's no possibility of anyone's knowing it, outside of us four, if none of us 'cheep.'"

Each of the four agreed to the plan as outlined, and it was launched. Robert's value to Belmont University was regarded as of paramount importance for their purposes, and it was accordingly accentuated most; while his immeasurable service to the spirit of athletics was emphasized with no less vigor and vehemence. The probability of his unwillingness to accept gold or silver, inasmuch as he was lavishly blessed in this respect, was next dwelt upon; nevertheless, it was forcibly argued that the obligation was binding and that the tender ought to be made—it was a duty which no conscientious student could sidestep. Those who circulated the subscription lists queried with emphasis:

"Where would Belmont be today athletically were it not for Bob Tadmor?"

Of course the question was pertinent, and there was only one answer. Even the poor student who was making his way through college by acting as stoker, or waiter, or office boy, could not, if he had one spark of college spirit or a modicum of college pride, refuse to contribute. Thus the game was played early and late; practically everybody contributed—there was no alternative. The student who didn't was frowned upon and denominated unfriendly to his alma mater. The movement, like a log rolling downhill, gained momentum as it went. Even the college professors subscribed liberally. Enthusiasm ran high. A bag of gold totaling near five thousand dollars was collected. A day was fixed for the presentation. The college band was out. Class colors and college colors fluttered everywhere. Vigorous class yells followed one another in quick succession. Naturally Robert was there. He was unbelievably surprised, like Julius Cæsar who thrice haltingly thrust the crown aside, but still fingered it covetously; so Robert Tadmire in a few well-chosen words shrewdly explained, as he thrust the moneybag aside, but still fingered the string that tied it:

"Ladies, gentlemen, and fellow students. This is certainly a big surprise to me. My first and overwhelming impulse is to refuse this unmistakable evidence of your kindness and good will; but upon maturer thought my nobler self rebels against such a course, when I consider the spirit in which this tender is made. It is not the monetary value of a gift that speaks the loudest—it is the spirit that actuates the giver, the motive that suggested the gift, that stirs the recipient's heartstrings most profoundly. I do not wish to be labeled 'unkind'; I do not wish to be accused of snobbishness; I do not wish to be misunderstood; I do not wish to be called a man without gratitude and without appreciation; so I have decided that it is wise and proper that I accept this gift as a remembrance of the happiest day of my life. Allow me to thank you, allow me to thank you a thousand times for this self-evident token of your regard; and with your continued encouragement and the help of my teammates, we'll certainly do our best to win the day on the field of sports henceforth. It is, at least, my hope and my fondest wish that 'Old Gold' will always flutter triumphantly from the top of the staff, and that athletics will continue, as heretofore, to flourish at grand old Belmont."

A prolonged outburst of applause followed this speech of

acceptance. Robert scooped up the moneybag while "long, hungry Cassius" and "et tu Brute" looked on in astonishment. Yes, "long, hungry Cassius" was there, but he was practically alone, and he was afraid to interfere; and friendly Brutus, too, was there, but the counter current of public opinion was so strong that he, also, was afraid. In fact, the cards had been stacked against them while they slept, and they were helpless.

Robert, of course, was grateful. He was in much the same dilemma as a drowning man; any sort of a temporary life-saver would be thankfully received, but the best was none too good; and naturally he decided to accept the best that was proffered. He and his three accomplices hurriedly left the hall by a side door and eagerly sought Robert's room where the shackles were covetously counted. There were exactly five thousand dollars in gold; but how long would five thousand last a society man like Robert Tadmire? Undoubtedly it would melt as fast as a snowman at the equator. But Robert now began crossing bridges before he got to them—something he had not hitherto done. While the stars were auspicious, he decided to be bold—decided to ask his professors to grant him his full quota of credits January first, thereby giving him not only the privilege of quitting college at Christmas, but the privilege of graduating with honors with his class in June. He gave as his reason for such a shocking request, "pressing business matters in New York which demanded his immediate personal attention." First, he went to those professors who were friendly, who were members of his fraternity; and to the more conservative ones later. His success was boundless. He, seemingly, was sailing over sweet-spirited waters. His inestimable worth to Belmont, owing to his having made it famous as a center of triumphant and clean sports, and the value of his personality as an inspiration to the rest of the student body appealed to the faculty profoundly. Robert was successful. His scheme worked, public opinion was with him. Even the hard-shelled professors did not hesitate. They enthusiastically supported and finally openly endorsed such a course as not only proper, but just and equitable.

So in recognition of his athletic achievements, it was generally understood by the faculty of Belmont that Mr. Tadmire was to be at liberty after Christmas with the privilege of graduating with his class in June. Like Napoleon, Robert

seemingly was born under a lucky star. However, Napoleon's star finally set, but it remained to be seen how soon, if ever, Robert Tadmores star would set.

XIX

WOMAN HAS HER WAY

A few days later at eventide Grace and Robert were out for a stroll. It was dusk. Ordinarily Robert was a happy-go-lucky, indifferent sort of a fellow, little mindful of the happenings of yesterday or the promises of the morrow; but, somehow, the past few days had been garbed in somber colors. The sunshine had lost its warmth, and life had lost its zest.

Grace had noticed his moroseness, but she attributed it to some temporary physical or mental depression and did **not** dream that financially he was embarrassed. However, while they were out promenading, he suddenly became more talkative, more jubilant, more optimistic. Grace, like all lovers, was a little blind; and, like all lovers, she too was over-kind. She little understood Robert's ulterior motives, she little knew his far-reaching purposes. He spoke in a confidential voice:

"Grace, I'm weary of college. After the football season is over, I'm going to secure a position, even though the salary be not very gratifying. I so much enjoy the arena of business—its hustle, its struggles for supremacy, the clash of wits, the cold operation of the law of the 'survival of the fittest.' "

"What kind of a position, Robert?"

"I haven't decided as yet, Grace—what would you suggest?"

"I was just wondering how you would like to be a newspaper man."

The suggestion, of course, was intensely interesting to Robert who had expected Grace to make a query of this sort. He answered untruthfully:

"I hadn't thought of that."

"It's a nice, clean, dignified profession."

"Yes, I imagine that it is and, upon first thought, I believe I favor the suggestion."

"Have you had any experience?" asked the girl.

"None whatsoever," he replied.

"I presume, before you embarked for yourself, you'd rather

have a position with someone who has already mastered the details of the profession."

"Yes, that, too, probably would be wise."

"What department would you prefer?"

"Sports, of course," said Robert.

"Shall I ask father?" asked Grace.

"It would certainly be kind of you."

"When could you arrange to start?"

"January first."

"January first? What! quit Belmont when your graduation day is in sight?"

Grace was probably a little selfish in her query, for she did not wish to be away from Robert. He questioned:

"Why not? The professors have given me sufficient credits to graduate me."

"How nice! I'll write father this very evening."

The stroll was soon over. Grace hastened to her room where she wrote her father as follows:

"Dear Papa:

My friend, Robert Tadmire, wishes to learn the newspaper business. He prefers, naturally, the position of 'Sport Editor.' All Belmont raves over Mr. Tadmire's athletic achievements. His professors, in recognition of his ability, have gladly advanced him enough credits to graduate him in June; so he naturally would be free to accept a position January first. Dear Papa, he's certainly an unusual fellow, and he would be a most valuable addition to your editorial staff. But, Papa dear, he has lots of money, so naturally money is not his primary purpose; but I would not want to insult him by offering him less than ten thousand dollars a year. Do arrange a place for Robert, dear Papa, and oblige.

Your loving daughter, Grace."

Upon receipt of this letter Mr. Conkling was worried. He had no place for "Belshazzar" in his printshop, much less did he want him for a son-in-law. He muttered to himself as he was reading Grace's letter:

"God forbid. Deliver my innocent, unsuspecting daughter from this modern 'Belshazzar.'"

The idea was repellent, revolting to the father, but he

answered his daughter as courteously and as graciously as he always had:

"Dear Grace:

I'm certainly sorry that I am unable to make room for Mr. Tadmore at the present time. From what you say, he certainly would make 'The Knickerbocker' a very valuable man. Perhaps at some future time some arrangement could be effected; but now, you know, I'm under an ironclad contract with each of my employees, and it would cost me thousands of dollars to annul their contracts. I'm indeed sorry, for Mr. Tadmore would undeniably give our editorial staff dignity and eclat.

Goodby, sweetheart, with lots of love from your
Daddy."

Grace was as furious as a wounded mountain lion when she received this letter. However anger soon gave way to tears. Her every wish had hitherto been granted by her indulgent father, whose family pride had always been paramount; so naturally, as is always the case, whether the person be a spoiled child, an invalid, or a pampered parent, Grace considered her father cruel and relentless. However, it seemed that she was checkmated; but after the tears were gone, her disappointment again expressed itself in anger. She remained in her room the rest of the day, sullen and unhappy. Near midnight she wrote her father as follows:

"Charles Conkling:

I don't think it was very nice of you to ignore your daughter's fondest wish in the high-handed manner that you did. I'm almost sick. I didn't know that you were so cold-blooded. I should have been more considerate of your feelings had you made a special request of me. I simply haven't the nerve to tell Mr. Tadmore that you have 'turned him down.' You could arrange a place for him if you wanted to, and I know it. Nothing ever thwarts your purposes when you take a notion to do a thing. Now write me and tell me that matters have been arranged.

Grace."

Mr. Conkling received the above letter in due time; and, after giving it careful consideration, he decided that some situations can be handled better and more effectively, if you are in close touch with them than when they are entirely out of your jurisdiction. So he wrote his daughter as follows:

"Dear Grace:

I believe you are right: Mr. Tadmores is too valuable a man to 'turn down,' even though it costs your father fifty thousand dollars to annul the contracts which stand in the way of employing him. Besides I'd expend another fifty thousand dollars to please my amiable little daughter than whom there is not one more delightful. So you employ Mr. Tadmores to be editor of 'The Sport Department' of 'The Knickerbocker' at a salary of ten thousand dollars the year, payable in weekly installments, beginning January first. With oceans of love, from

Your Daddy."

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The Rocky Mountains were never more beautiful, and the air was never more refreshing; however, the pink had left Julia Nansen's cheeks. She was now as fragile as a barley stalk. Her form had wasted and her countenance was pallid and ghastly. Her health seemed to be gradually giving away under the continuous strain of her husband's neglect. Sorrow and longing were eating her life away. She was sitting upon the same boulder that had been hallowed by her husband's parting words of love and devotion and adoration. However, it had been reconsecrated now far more than human words could express by the devotion of this fair young woman. It was her nest, her lookout, her altar.

She was continually thinking of other days and other skies. Her heart was heavy, but she was sure that God was good and that Robert was true. She suddenly heard footsteps. She turned and saw a young mountaineer approaching. He was young and fair and stalwart and she had known him for many days. He was strong and athletic and inured to the hardships of the mountains. He accosted her tenderly:

"Julia, I have come to ask you to be my wife."

"Reuben, I cannot. Robert Tadmores is my husband and I am his wife."

"He has been gone these three years."

"That makes no difference—to Robert I shall always be true."

"He has not been true to you. He'll never come back to see you again."

"Now Reuben, don't talk that way, else we will not be friends. Robert will come back when he can. I hope nothing has happened to him. If you know anything for sure, Reuben, you'll tell me if you are my friend," replied Julia anxiously, as tears trickled down her pale, marble-like cheeks.

"Julia, he has married another woman."

"Reuben, you can go away. I do not believe you. You cause me pain and you make my heart bleed. You are trying to bring evil upon me and my family and my happiness."

"Let me stay, Julia—I love you."

"Reuben, I will be your friend, if you will go away; but I shall always be true to Robert Tadmores—goodby."

Reuben turned and moved slowly away, leaving Julia with her sorrow and her sadness. Julia's son was playing at her knee. The mountain stream chattered indifferently to the innocent boy who was saying:

"Papa! Papa! Where's my papa, mamma? Why don't he tum back?"

"He will come back, dear Rodney. God is good, and papa is good. I found a stalk of goldenrod blooming in the valley today. I'm going to the mountains every morning now at sunrise to look for hickery nuts. Papa said he'd be back before the 'hicker nuts' fall."

"Me'll help mamma find hicker nuts."

"All right, sweetheart; maybe then dear papa'll come. He's been gone so long—but I've prayed so much that I'm sure that God wouldn't let anything happen to him. I'm so sure that he'll come back to us soon, sweetheart."

XX

HIRAM LONGDEN

"Whoa!" shouted a dust-covered gentleman with a ragged beard and long unkempt hair. He was jaded and in the garb of a farmer. He was driving a bony, grey horse hitched to an old rickety spring wagon, and had stopped in front of "The Knickerbocker" offices. The gentleman was perhaps fifty, and his carriage was that of a man of importance. His self-esteem was self-evident. It was undeniably boundless and seemed to be seasoned with an insinuating egotism. He gazed in wonder at the pretentious stone building which housed "The Knickerbocker," after which he remained seated while he viewed the many skyscrapers that confronted him, far and near.

The grey horse was unaccustomed to so much noise and excitement, and he looked about wildly as if about to attempt the impossible: namely, run away. After the weary traveler had completed his survey, he deliberately and slowly alighted, as though suffering in a greater or less degree with rheumatism. He yawned, stretched and straightened up until he was as straight as an arrow, and seemed to have the dignity of the Prince of Zulu. He wore no collar; his overalls were patched and faded and thickly covered with dust; his cold, steel-blue eyes betrayed no affection for man or beast, and his plow shoes were crude and cumbersome and innocent of blacking.

The doors of "The Knickerbocker" offices were thrown wide open. The stranger boldly entered. Egotists are always bold and usually ignorant. Our newcomer bravely accosted a gentleman who was just passing out the door:

"I want to see the manager."

The gentleman addressed was one of the assistant editors. He quickly looked the gentleman over and answered:

"Mr. Conkling's office is the last on your right."

The bewhiskered stranger was a gentleman unafraid; neither was he abashed by the elegant furnishings and the mahogany furniture and the well-groomed individuals upon his right and

upon his left, all of whom were watching him intently. He quickly reached Mr. Conkling's office, and at once began talking in a loud, imperious voice:

"Sir, I want to speak to Dudley—Dudley Longden—where is the boy?"

"Dudley's at lunch," answered Mr. Conkling politely.

"When is he comin' back?"

"In a half hour, perhaps."

"I'm goin' to see him sooner."

"Are you his father?"

"Why do you ask? What has he done? I don't pay none of his bills."

"Don't you worry a minute about that; Dudley pays his own bills."

"Yes, I'm his father—any disgrace connected with our family name?"

"Not that I know of."

"Let me say right here before we go no further that I'm a German and I'm proud of it," spoke Mr. Longden boldly and in a loud voice.

"It's unwise, Mr. Longden, for you to talk that way in New York."

"What! Hain't my fatherland the greatest country in the world? Hain't the Kaiser the biggest man in the world?"

"No. I say no, 'No'; but confidentially, Mr. Longden, and as a friend of Dudley's I'd advise you to be careful. The feeling here is very bitter against German sympathizers. In fact, the police are eagerly watching for German sympathizers, and if they hear a word that's unpatriotic, they'll pick up the offender and lodge him in jail."

"I hain't afeered of no Yankee I ever seed."

"Neither is a lobster, or an old goose, or a jackass," spoke Mr. Conkling heatedly, for he was one hundred per cent American.

Mr. Longden looked at the editor with questioning eyes, not knowing how to construe Mr. Conkling's illusions, not knowing whether or not he had been insulted, but finally he queried:

"Did you call me a jackass and an old goose?"

"No sir."

"What did you say then?"

"I said, 'neither was an old goose or a jackass' afraid of a

Yankee. Now is there anything further that I can do for you?"

"Tell me where I kin find my sonnie, Dudley."

"If you'll keep still about your 'dear old Shermanny,' you may come into my office here and wait until Dudley returns, which will not be long—he's always precisely on time," replied Mr. Longden deferentially, on Dudley's account.

"What sort of help is Dudley?"

"There's none better. Dudley's a remarkable boy. You should be proud of him."

"I raised him that there way—I deserve the credit," answered Mr. Longden proudly as he raised his head a little higher.

"I supposed so. I could tell by Dudley's trustworthiness that he had a noble father," answered Mr. Conkling sarcastically.

"Yes, I'm his fodder, and I trained him myself, and made a gentleman out of him," replied the father.

"I can always tell when a father gives his boy a chance; I can tell when he pays his son well for his services, and furnishes him plenty of good books to read."

Mr. Conkling's sarcasm was now having a telling effect. Mr. Longden winced visibly and turned pale. He hesitated, stammered, and answered in a much lower voice:

"Yes, I hain't denyin' it; I deserve lots of credit."

"Again, you were wise when you sent him to New York, that he might have a chance which he could get nowhere else—a chance to see and learn and rise and be somebody."

"Yes, I seed there was no chance fer the boy on my clay farm, so I thought I'd try growin' him in New York soil."

"You certainly showed a splendid spirit by sending him here. Most men are selfish and want to keep a noble son like Dudley at home, want to pay him a double wage in order that they may keep him at home."

Mr. Longden's voice was getting weaker and weaker as he answered Mr. Conkling's sarcastic sallies; but he had gone so far in taking all the credit to himself that he could not now change his course. He answered meekly:

"Yes, I wanted the boy to go."

"Dudley is certainly a prince. I have implicit confidence in him; I can trust him anywhere, any time."

"How much does he git?"

"Thirty-five dollars a week."

"Thirty-five dollars a week!" gasped the old man.

"Yes, and I'm going to give him a raise."

"He hain't wuth it—there hain't nobody what's wuth six dollars a day."

"I'm paying some fellows eight dollars a day who do less than Dudley."

"Yes and us-uns, us poor farmers pay the bill. No wonder we're poor and a-gittin' poorer all the time."

"How's that?"

"Why, don't you know the honest farmer eventually pays fer everything?"

"Do you take my paper?"

"I hain't able to afford it."

"Then, tell me, just how much of Dudley's salary do you pay?"

"The merchants pay you, and we pay the merchants, don't you see?"

"How much merchandise have you bought in New York during the past year?"

"I hain't asked Dudley how much he's bought."

"I'm talking to you—you've got nothing to do with Dudley's expenditures."

"I hain't bought nothin', but lots of farmers has."

"I'm talking to you, now."

At this juncture Dudley entered. Mr. Conkling called him as he passed his office door. Dudley's dress was mediocre, but he had in his carriage and actions that something that the city man absorbs from an urban atmosphere; an indifference to novel surroundings, a confidence in himself, a stolidness and seeming unconcern when confronted by the bigness of things. It is an attitude of self-respect, but not pertness; of confidence, but not egotism. So, too, Dudley had absorbed these characteristics from the atmosphere of Greater New York, and his carriage and indifference were the same as that, that characterizes all other city men.

When Dudley first beheld his father, his eyes flashed like balls of fire, wonder suffused his countenance and a feeling of dread bordering upon hate seized his soul. However, Dudley unconsciously came nearer and at once he saw that he was not mistaken, it was his father. He ejaculated in a kindly

voice, although it required all the will-power at his command:

"Why, father, when did you come?"

The father at once assumed his old-time imperiousness. His greetings were frozen before they were spoken. He gave his son's interrogation no consideration. His steel-blue eyes were as cold as the northern seas. No paternal fires were burning there. Dudley continued:

"Father, will you go over to the flat and wash and have some lunch?"

"I want to see yer modder, of course—what do you suppose I'm here fer?"

"Very well, if Mr. Conkling will excuse me a few moments, I'll show you the way."

"Certainly, Dudley—go right ahead," replied Mr. Conkling courteously.

"You ask Mr. Conkling's permission, when I'm here? I never heered of sich impertinence. Hain't you my son? Hain't it one of the Commandments fer a boy to honor his father?"

Dudley did not answer. He was disgusted, provoked, chagrined. He arose and walked quickly away and out the door that his father might have no more opportunities to disgrace his family and himself in Mr. Conkling's presence. When Dudley was outside "The Knickerbocker" offices, he answered:

"Father, you are very inconsiderate; Mr. Conkling is my employer, and it was only a matter of ordinary courtesy for me to ask his permission to go with you. He employs me, and he pays me, and certain hours belong wholly to him."

The two were now approaching the jaded horse and the rickety spring wagon in an unfriendly frame of mind. Mr. Conkling was watching developments from one of the windows. He was sure that a storm was brewing. He wondered just how much of the old man's impudence Dudley would tolerate, for he was sure that Dudley was still smarting from indignities visited upon him by his father back home. Just as Dudley was about to mount upon the seat of the spring wagon the father answered irately:

"You stop lecturin' me, sir—I hain't no flunkey; I'm yer fodder and I demand respect. I'm yer master, and I'm goin' to have obedience—do you understand?"

"Father, if you persist in your old-time, fault-finding,

badgering ways, I'm going back to work. I'm now making my own way, and I have been my own boss since you drove me from home. I ask no more favors from you; but I'll show you every courtesy and every consideration, if you'll act as though you were half civilized."

"We'll jist see about that. Yes, we'll jist see who's boss. No striplin' of a son is a goin' to bluff me."

Dudley turned quickly and started toward the entrance to "The Knickerbocker" offices. A look of dismay suffused the father's countenance. He now had grave doubts as to whether his old-time, domineering ways were going to work any longer. He was not so sure now that he was the boss. He called after Dudley in an exasperated, but gentler voice:

"Dudley! Here! You idiot! air you a tryin' to embarrass me?"

Mr. Conkling smiled from his window and watched more eagerly, for he knew that friction had already arisen. Dudley now turned and regarded his father with a look of contempt. The father inquired:

"Where kin I feed Pet?"

Dudley slowly, but defiantly approached the vehicle and climbed upon the seat followed by his pestiferous father. He briefly gave direction as to how to drive, and when to turn; but no other words were spoken until after the horse was cared for. Then the father commanded in a milder voice:

"Now, take me to your mudder."

"I expect we'd better take a street car—it's fifteen blocks."

"Well," answered the father submissively, "I hain't got much money."

"I'll pay the carfare," answered Dudley in a more kindly voice.

So the two were soon climbing the stairs that led to Dudley's flat. Mrs. Longden saw her husband coming, and her heart involuntarily fluttered. She dreaded the meeting. She dreaded the ordeal. As soon as the children saw the "Old Bear," as the children denominated him, they scattered like a family of prairie chickens when confronted by the hunter. Mr. Longden boldly entered. His wife saluted him in a kindly voice:

"Why, Hiram!"

She then hesitated. She was wondering what was going to happen next. She was always in doubt. The husband answered his wife's greeting with:

"I thought you was comin' back in a month—air you still my wife?"

"Of course, I am, Hiram; but Dudley needed me more than you."

"I supposed you'd deserted, and I come over to have an understandin'."

"Hiram, you certainly know that I owe the children some consideration. They wanted to stay."

"Course they'd want to stay—they kin gad all the time here."

"Each has a job and is earning eight dollars a week. None of them is lazy—they want to and are anxious to work. They will never again ask you for a cent of money."

This was the strongest argument that the wife could produce and she knew it. The husband answered crabbedly:

"It wouldn't do 'em no good if they did."

"I think they know that."

"You're a raisin' a fine bouquet of wild flowers, I must say."

"They have so many more opportunities here, Hiram."

"Opportunities, the devil! Where air the two brats what run away?"

"They may be downtown."

"They sold all the good hens and left the bad ones and spent the money. What do you think of that fer high-handed, wild-western methods in civilized Ohio?"

"How much spending money did you give them?"

"How much? Do you think I'm goin' to give them there hyenas money? Do you think I'm goin' to die in the poor-house? Where air the brats?"

The mother made no answer. The children, who were hiding under the bed, heard the father's threatening words, and were cringing and undergoing the keenest torture. They were sure that the day and hour of their undoing was at hand. The mother purposely changed the subject by inquiring:

"Have you had your dinner, Hiram?"

"Of course I hain't,—but I don't want none. Git ready and we'll start fer home in an hour."

"That would be impossible, Hiram."

"Impossible, the devil! You git ready—where air the kids, I say?"

"I can't possibly get ready under four or five days, Hiram."

"I'll be here in jist one hour with Pet and the spring wagon, and, if you're a goin' to continue to be my wife, you be ready."

Dudley had said nothing thus far, but now he interposed:

"Now, father, mother is going to stay with me until March."

"Until March? How do you know? Who air you?"

"Anyway, mother's not going back to Waterloo until March. She needs the rest, and the children need the refining influences of the city. Six months in New York will be an education to them."

"Education, the devil!"

"Hiram! How you do talk! Now, stop that! Have you backslidden? I never thought you'd talk that way, Hiram. Church members ought to be more careful and more religious," interposed his wife graciously.

"You-uns would drive a feller to suicide. I've got to watch myself all the time. I wouldn't be surprised at nothin'."

"Father, you'd just as well quiet your nerves and eat your lunch, for mother is going to stay with me through the winter. This has been decided upon and there's no use in discussing it. All of us think that mother's general health demands this rest."

"It's been decided upon, eh? Decided in my absence, eh? So a husband has no rights, eh? It seems that I'm a small potater nowadays, eh?"

"Why, father, you astonish me: it would simply be impossible for mother to endure the hardships of a trip home in a spring wagon."

"I guess I know more than you New York pewees know about sich things. I guess I have rights."

"Certainly, father, you have rights; but mother and the rest of us have rights, too. However, you have no right to continually bluff and abuse and badger mother and the rest of us."

"I kin git a divorce."

"Any fool can do that," answered Dudley irately.

"Hiram, I don't want to hear any more of that divorce stuff from you. I say, that's enough of that kind of talk," spoke the wife emphatically.

"But I mean it," insisted the husband doggedly.

"Then, Hiram, you do just as you please about getting a

divorce, and I'll be content," replied the wife decisively, but in a kindly voice.

Mr. Longden now fully realized for the first time in his life that his family had declared its dependence. Quiet reigned for some five minutes. The husband was vexed and worried, but he was thinking. He was angry, but he was being disciplined. He was especially angry at Dudley. It was he—he was sure—that had scattered this propaganda of independence, so the father now "about faced" and trained his guns upon Dudley:

"Now sir, you took them there overalls of mine."

"You mean the pair that I wore away from home? The ones that you had discarded? The ones that you gave me after you were through with them?"

"I never give them to you; besides they were good overalls."

"What do you want? What are you driving at?"

"Either the overalls or the money to buy another pair."

"But they were ragged and patched and faded and ready for the ragbag—you certainly don't want a new pair in the place of them."

"That hain't a makin' no difference—they were as good to me as new ones."

"And you a trustee of the church?"

"Yes, sir. Did you think you could bunco a feller simply because he's a trustee?"

"How much do you want for them?"

"Two dollars."

"What are new ones worth?"

"Two dollars."

"Here's the money. I'll be a man—you can be a pinching bug if you want to."

"Now, I'll take that there watch of mine that you have."

"I thought you gave me that watch for going with the threshing machine one year."

"Not to keep. No, no; not on yer life. I let you have it to use. Yes, I jist loaned it to you durin' threshin' time."

"How much is the watch worth?"

"Fifty dollars."

"I can buy five watches that are better than it for fifty dollars."

"I tell you that watch is worth fifty dollars and I want the money."

"If you weren't my father and an 'amen' church member of Waterloo, I'd call you a liar. Here's the money for the watch, but remember that church members are supposed to be honorable in church and out of church."

"That's 'zactly what I'm doin': tryin' to be honorable with myself and my bank account."

"A thief stole the watch or you'd certainly get the watch back instead of the money."

"Now yer board after you was sixteen! All the childrens will have to pay board if they stay at my home after they're sixteen."

"Board? Isn't a farm hand entitled to his board? You never gave me a penny for my work, and now you want to charge me board. The idea! You're a crook."

"Now, don't spring that on me—you wasn't wuth yer board."

"It isn't right. It's wrong and I'll never pay it, I tell you."

"I'll call the police."

"You're an avaricious old Shylock. Call the police and see if I care."

The mother foresaw that there was now going to be trouble. She knew that her husband was obstinate, and she knew that Dudley was determined, because he had decided that he was right. So Mrs. Longden intervened:

"If you have the money, Dudley, pay him."

"Yes, you'd better pay me," commanded the father imperiously, "if you want to keep out of jail, because I'll sure put you there if you don't pay."

"In all my life I never have found as unreasonable and as 'crooked' a man."

"I won't fool a minute. You bet I'll have you run in. I mean business, I tell you. This here tryin' to beat a board bill is a mighty ticklish performance."

"How much do you want, Mr. Shylock?"

"Five dollars a week for a year and seven months."

"For mother's sake I'm going to give you a check for this amount, but I'll fight for seven years before I'll ever give you another cent—do you understand, Shylock? Do you get me?"

As Dudley spoke, his eyes flashed like dagger points. He was incensed. He was intensely angry. Every atom of his being was swollen with indignation. Thus the altercation continued. Many heated discussions, tinctured with sarcasm and

bitterness, followed; but Dudley would give his father no further consideration in any of the many matters that arose. The injustice of his father's demands staggered him. He could not believe that any father would make such demands, except *his* father. Naturally this made him bitter and inconsiderate.

Finally lunch was over. The father abruptly arose and quitted the flat without so much as bidding his wife or Dudley "goodby." He went directly to the livery stable, got his horse and spring wagon and started. He stopped in front of "The Knickerbocker" building, alighted, entered, officiously walked up to Mr. Conkling's office window and addressed him in a loud voice:

"Mr. Conkling, I'm here to tell you, 'goodby.'"

"Going so soon, Mr. Longden?"

"Yes, I must be goin'—my stock needs me."

"How long did it take you to drive through?"

"Three long, dusty weeks," spoke Mr. Longden reminiscently.

"Isn't it too hard a trip to make with a horse and wagon?"

"The trip hain't as hard fer a feller to bear as an ungrateful family."

"Then your family did not receive you cordially?"

"No."

"And Dudley?"

"He defied me. He's an ungrateful son, Mr. Conkling."

"Maybe you're in the wrong."

"I hain't never wrong."

"It must be a delightful feeling to know absolutely that you're always right—at times I have my doubts."

"My wife refused to go back home with me. I don't know, but it looks like I was a-goin' to potter along by myself from now on—yes, it sorter looks like I was a widerer."

"Maybe the children will have a better chance here, Mr. Longden."

"To git in jail, yes."

"I fear you're a little pessimistic—you ought to be more hopeful."

"I hain't got nothin' to be hopeful about."

"How much did you owe Dudley?"

"Owe Dudley? What's the matter with you? He owed me."

"Why Dudley said you'd never paid him a cent for what

he did on the farm, and I supposed that you'd driven over to settle."

"Heh, eh; nothin' of that sort. I come after what he was owin' me."

"And he paid you?"

"Yer mighty right he paid me, but I perty near had to call the police."

"What did he owe you for?"

"Why, he run away with my overalls and my watch, and he forgot to pay his board bill."

"Board bill?"

"Yes, I charge board after they're sixteen."

"How much board did you charge him?"

"Five dollars a week. Hain't that fair enough?"

"It all depends upon how much you paid him for his work."

"I didn't pay him nothin' fer his work. He weren't wuth nothin'. I remember six er seven days that he never worked a stitch, and course I'm not a goin' to pay that sort of a hand nothin'. Besides I didn't charge Dudley nothin' fer his raisin', and I guess he's satisfied."

"Mr. Longden, I fear you're an austere, ungrateful father. If you want your family to love you, you'll have to change your ways. You're too greedy, too grasping, too grouchy."

"So you air a takin' sides agin me?"

"No, I'm not 'agin' you, but as I grow older, I regret more and more that I ever spoke an unkind word to my family, and I never have spoken very many. They have always got practically everything that they wanted; but still, I say, I regret, as the shadows lengthen, that I wasn't more indulgent, more kind, more pleasant, more cheery."

"Yes, and some of these nights yer family 'll be caught a robbin' a graveyard."

"Thank goodness! they haven't been so characterized so far. Now, Mr. Longden, hear me: either you or your family is wrong. It is possible that it is you. So you ponder the suggestion that I'm going to make, and try it, and see if the seed doesn't produce sunflowers."

"I don't want to raise no sunflowers. I hate sunflowers and I won't grow no sunflowers, I tell you."

"Now listen! the seed that I want you to sow will produce flowers of happiness."

"Some more of yer blue sky stuff, I 'spect."

"This blue sky doesn't cost you anything, so listen. You go home and buy your amiable wife the nicest bouquet of flowers that you can find within forty miles of Waterloo; and then—"

"What do you think I am? A gold mine er a fool?"

"— send it to her. Then you send each of the children ten dollars' worth of chocolates, and write them a letter telling them how much you love them, how much you miss them, how lonesome you are without them, how you'd like to see them, how desolate life is without them, how—"

"I hain't a goin' to do it, I tell you—not unless I go crazy on the way back home. There hain't no wonder that there hain't no honest people no more—air you a socialist?"

"No sir; but if you'll do as I tell you, every one of your children will meet you at the gate every evening with open arms and a smile that is worth more than the price of a farm. They'll even run down the road to meet you and to greet you, and to cheer you, and make you young again. They'll love you and do things for you, and make your life a song and your declining years a lullaby."

"I'll never do it, I say. It's tommyrot, it's tommyrot I say," answered Mr. Longden as he arose in a huff, buttoned his waistcoat tightly about him, abruptly quitted Mr. Conkling's private office, approached his jaded, grey horse with bitterness in his heart and hatred in his head, resentfully kicked the dust of Greater New York off his shoes, defiantly climbed upon his wagon, hit the grey nag a sharp slap with the lines, and he was off—off on his long journey to the hills of Waterloo.

XXI

THE PRINTER'S UNION

October was almost gone. It was night and Dudley was operating a linotype machine. Mr. Bridgeport, the walking delegate of "The Printer's Union," who was slowly walking along the street in front of "The Knickerbocker" building, suddenly stopped and listened. He was sure that he heard the familiar rattle of a linotype machine in operation. He listened a second time. He was not mistaken. He at once presumed that it was the operator who had been "doing half of his work after supper." He decided to go in and visit a while with him. He went to the rear door, and was about to rattle it, when he suddenly saw Dudley Longden operating one of the machines most skillfully. He did not enter. He drew back and hastily retreated. He forthwith reported his discovery to the Printer's Union which was then in session. The membership was highly incensed. Much bitterness was displayed, and many fiery harangues were made. Dudley had long been suspected! now he had been caught. The Printer's Union had hitherto assumed an unfriendly attitude toward him since he had steadfastly refused to join them; but now it was openly antagonistic.

Dissatisfaction and unrest prevailed to an alarming extent throughout the entire labor world. It had dictated its own terms, had been its own boss, and had enjoyed unprecedented prosperity, for more than three years. Its members were very much like spoiled children. They had clamored repeatedly for higher wages and fewer hours, but no sooner were these granted than they demanded still higher wages and fewer hours. Thus a large part of the labor world had become not only unreasonable, but dissatisfied, and it lapsed into a state of ferment. It was intoxicated. It was like a boy who has eaten too many persimmons—a boy who wants something and doesn't know what. The Printer's Union, because of minor grievances, had threatened repeatedly to strike during the autumn months; now a strike seemed inevitable.

The following morning Anna accosted Dudley, as soon as she reached "The Knickerbocker" offices:

"I understand that you're a linotype operator."

"Who told you?"

"The man that saw you."

"I was merely amusing myself."

"Anyway, the union is going to call a strike Saturday night, if you have not joined by that time."

"That wouldn't hurt me—it would hurt Mr. Conkling only."

"He can discharge you or take the consequences."

"I don't know that Mr. Conkling knows that I have been playing one of the machines."

"He will know it, and then he can retain you and take the consequences, or discharge you and keep the union workmen on the job."

Dudley thought for a moment; he regarded the floor intently but made no reply. Anna continued:

"And, Dudley, I'm going to demand, in fact I'm going to see that you join our union."

"Anna, I've told you time and again why I'd rather not join the union."

"That makes no difference; your reasons are not good ones—either you're going to be for the union or for Mr. Conkling. It's one or the other."

"Hasn't Mr. Conkling paid you well?"

"He had to. The union forced him to."

"Well, I know this: I have made no demands and I have no complaints."

"Most certainly not, but remember this: it is the union that has forced wages up. It and not Mr. Conkling deserves the credit for our present high scale of wages. You would be getting only a dollar a day if it were not for the union."

"Do you suppose?"

"Greedy capitalists, a few years since, ground labor under their heels until it could scarcely exist, but thank heaven! a brighter day has dawned. It was unions that brought this change about; it was unions, I say, that forced the avaricious capitalist to give us a square deal."

"Mr. Conkling has never appeared to me to be exacting. Apparently, he has always seemed perfectly fair."

"Anyway, Dudley, if you and I are to be friends, you will have to join the union."

"Now, Anna, you're not as fair as Mr. Conkling whom you charge with unfairness. Why, such a demand is unreasonable."

"Dudley Longden, if you don't join the union before Saturday night, you can never come to my home again," replied Anna with glaring eyes.

This was indeed a bold move on Anna's part. She certainly must have felt sure of her ground, for she had fearlessly advanced and burned all the bridges behind her. She must have been absolutely sure that she could bend the bush as she chose—perhaps she thought the sapling was a willow when in truth it was an oak—a firm, unyielding oak. In a moment Dudley replied courteously:

"Very well, Anna, I'll think it over."

Dudley then turned nimbly upon his heels and walked away. As soon as Mr. Conkling entered his office, Dudley accosted him—Anna was busily engaged—saying:

"Mr. Conkling, may I annoy you a moment?"

"You certainly may, Dudley."

"Mr. Conkling, I believe the printers are going to strike."

"What makes you think so, Dudley?"

"They have so many secrets, and they're not taking any interest in their work."

"I, too, have noticed that."

"Besides, they're trying to force me into the union."

"Would you like to join them, Dudley?"

"No, I'd rather not, Mr. Conkling."

"Now, Dudley, you do whatever you think is best for you."

"I'm working for you and your interests, Mr. Conkling."

"Don't worry about me, Dudley; you look after your own best interests."

"But they're going to strike Saturday night, if I don't join them, or you don't discharge me."

"I'll never discharge you, Dudley; you've been too trustworthy and too faithful."

"Then I'll never join the union, Mr. Conkling."

"Dudley, the Printer's Union has had strike on the brain for more than a year, and I'm getting tired of hearing their threats. Now, if they want to strike, they can strike and get it out of their system. However, if they strike, I want them to stay out until they get enough of it, until they're thoroughly

satisfied. If I weren't treating them right, it would be an altogether different proposition. I have nothing against their union if it is reasonable; in fact, I'd rather treat with one man than five hundred, if that one man has a disposition to be fair; but I simply balk when one man or a dozen men try to force me."

"They are going to try to force you to pay them more money for fewer hours."

"I hope they don't want a seven-hour day."

"They do, Mr. Conkling."

"Dudley, before I'll grant it, I'll lock up my printshop and quit. Dudley, I'm not a rich man, but I have enough capital to quit the newspaper business and live comfortably the rest of my days. I don't see and I can't see what these fellows mean; they've got to have work; I can get along without them, but they can't get along without me or someone like me. Still they seem to regard me as their enemy, and they try to bluff me and intimidate me, as if I were dependent upon them. What would these fellows do, if the rich should lock their wealth in vaults, and let the poor man shift? How would he live? What would he do?"

"Personally, I think they have no good reason for striking—they're well paid, and they ought to be willing to work eight hours each day."

"Dudley, I simply can't pay them any more money. If I did anything I'd reduce their wages."

"There's going to be war, Mr. Conkling, so keep your eyes open," said Dudley as he politely left the editor's office.

In an hour or so, Anna's father entered "The Knickerbocker" offices and called Dudley to one side, saying:

"Well, Dudley, what are you going to do?"

"What do you mean, Mr. Bridgeport?"

"Are you or are you not going to join the union? I want an answer right now: 'Yes,' or 'No.'"

"Mr. Bridgeport, I'm a friend of labor—I'm a laboring man myself, and I naturally have no reason for not being friendly to labor. But, as I have told Anna two or three times, Mr. Conkling took me in when I was down and out, when I was virtually a tramp, when I was hungry and tired and weary of life; and he has been a father to me ever since. Would you, Mr. Bridgeport, join a union in opposition to your father's interests?"

"I would. The union will do more for you than your father would ever do. Besides if your father has treated his workmen right, the union will not hurt him."

"Explain how the unions will do more for you than your father."

"Why, any fool can see that you would now be getting ten dollars a week instead of thirty-five, had the union not set the pace by fixing the scale high, very high. The unionists are the fellows that you should thank for your thirty-five dollars a week."

"That's exactly Anna's argument, but Mr. Conkling was absolutely under no obligation to pay me more than four dollars a week."

"They say that you have been operating a linotype machine secretly."

"For the pleasure of it, yes."

"Mr. Conkling has been paying you for this extra time?"

"No sir, he has not."

"Who has?"

"No one."

"Will you or will you not join our union?"

"I haven't decided yet what I'll do."

"Take my advice and decide now."

"I'll not join, Mr. Bridgeport, until I'm thoroughly convinced that the union is right. As I see it now, you are wrong in your decision to strike Saturday night."

"Why? Wherein?"

"Because you have nothing to strike for. You're getting better wages than you ever got before in all time."

"Sure; and we're going to get more."

"I'm not so sure about that. Besides public opinion will decide against you, even if you win. You'll bring your union into disrepute. The public is beginning to figure out who, in the end, pays these advances; and their attitude is becoming decidedly hostile toward unions generally, simply because the unions are making so many unreasonable demands. Unions are all right if you can hold the radicals down; but it seems, nowadays, that the radicals are in the majority."

"Then you think that labor should not be unionized?"

"I didn't say that."

"Capital is unionized. Capital co-operates. Capital has its

secret meetings and its secret understandings. Capital says, 'let the public be damned.'"

"I have never heard of its being so unwise."

"It virtually says it. It says it in actions, if not in words. How about the pink lead and popgun fellows? How about the Tin Stove Manufacturers' Association? The white mule control? The door register manufacturers?"

"I confess that I know nothing about any of these."

"You'd better get in touch with the world of affairs if you're going to pass judgment in matters of equity, and be a tribunal of justice who decides what is right and what is wrong."

"I'm not posing as a judge, nor have I ever considered myself one."

"Practically all of the pink lead concerns send out cards at irregular intervals announcing their advances or their declines—how does it happen that all these fellows simultaneously get the notion to increase or decrease the price of pink lead precisely the same number of cents on each hundred pounds? Is it accidental?"

"It would seem not," said Dudley.

"I have been told, but I have never verified it, that every new tin stove that is manufactured by a member of The Tin Stove Manufacturers' Association is shipped to Chicago where three experts tear it to pieces and fix the price at which it shall be sold."

"That's undeniably wrong. It destroys competition and is in restraint of trade."

"Sure it's wrong. Trusts and combinations and 'gentlemen' are as thick as 'chinky pins' of the forest. They pick the geese clean, still you hesitate about joining a labor union that is only asking a square deal and a living wage."

"If it were not for Mr. Conkling, I wouldn't hesitate a moment."

"Dang Mr. Conkling! He's as avaricious as the ammunition fellows who haven't declined their prices one cent since the war."

"I don't understand you, Mr. Bridgeport; you say that these trusts and understandings are wrong, still you want me to join one of them."

"Fool! I say that since capital is organized, labor is helpless, absolutely helpless if it does not organize; I say that labor must organize as a matter of self-protection."

"Still, because capital does wrong, that's no reason that labor should do wrong."

"Oh, you rabbit! You remind me of that long-eared animal what brays. That's Sunday school talk."

"Really, I can't see wherein capital is any more avaricious than labor."

"You simply give me a pain."

"All of the enterprises of this country are not governed by a trust. The most of them compete."

"The industrial world of today resembles a barrel of apples: the good ones are all bad."

"I can't see but that capital is as fair as labor," said Dudley.

"Then you think that capital is one of the angels that has never planted its iron heel upon the neck of labor until labor staggered and fell from hunger and exposure and exhaustion?"

"Yes, I think that capital did maltreat labor and impose upon it; but I also think that each has recently shown a disposition, on sundry occasions, to totally destroy the other. Still neither can prosper without the other. Each is necessary to the other. However, capital can close its factories and wait, while labor must have work or starve. Capital is and always will be the more independent of the two."

"Labor does not claim to be perfect—it is human; but it does claim to be more perfect and more considerate than capital," said Bridgeport.

"Just the other day a New York contractor was forced by the labor union to pay a young man double time, while he ate his dinner, simply because the pumping machine which the young man operated, was allowed to run while the young fellow ate his dinner—right or wrong?"

"That same contractor had probably worked many a poor cuss to death."

"A year and one-half since, when an employer went through his wire-nail mill, one-third of the employees were sitting on their machines, whittling and telling jokes. These loafers paid absolutely no attention to their proprietor; in fact, they defied him. Mind you, he was paying them well for their work; but had he said a word to one of them, the entire force would have quit—right or wrong?"

"I'll answer that question by asking one. Commission men in the city of Chicago a few years since allowed car-load after

car-load of potatoes to rot on the tracks in the railway yards, that they might keep the price of spuds up, when countless men, women and children were hungry and could not afford to pay the price—right or wrong?”

“Wrong! Undeniably wrong! Capital, I say has many sins to answer for—so has labor.”

“Peaches were wasting in Arkansas. They would not bring seventy-five cents a bushel; but here in New York they sold for four dollars and fifty cents a bushel—who was the hog? Who was the goat?”

“Understand me, Mr. Bridgeport, I’m not defending capital—I’m a laboring man—but I say labor frequently hurts its own cause by being over-radical. It seems to me that we are drifting toward socialism.”

“I should say that we are drifting toward socialism, and if the government doesn’t throttle these avaricious trusts speedily, we’ll never stop this side of Bolshevism.”

“I agree that there’s too much profiteering, too much grafting in high places, too much stealing of big amounts and little amounts.”

“Why, even the doctors stack the cards on you before you’re born and you have to pay the schedule; the produce man and the meat man get your pay envelope before you have a chance to see what you got, while the coffin trust and the undertaker take what is left in your pockets and a mortgage on your future for the balance; so what is a white man going to do if he doesn’t join the union?”

“It’s an unfortunate predicament, I admit. They simply ‘have us,’ I guess.”

“But you’d allow yourself to be cooked and canned before you’d oppose the boss?”

“I’d join the union forthwith, if I were employed by anyone else.”

“So you will not join?”

“No, Mr. Bridgeport, my conscience under the circumstances simply will not give its consent.”

“Good day, sir—this is not the end. Remember this, Dudley Longden, if everything is tied up, if lives are lost and property is destroyed, you and you alone will be the cause. You, I say, could avert this strike, if you would; but since you refuse to act, you must shoulder the responsibility.”

"I'm sorry I can't give my consent to join the union, but my conscience forbids."

"I'd hate to have the responsibility of this strike hanging over me. However, it's up to you and not to me—it will be your tea party."

"Goodby, Mr. Bridgeport."

The last few sentences of the walking delegate worried Dudley more than all else that he had said. He did not wish to be held responsible ethically, if not actually, for the loss of property and the loss of human life which sometimes accompanies our industrial strikes; so Dudley passed a restless night.

XXII

THE PROPOSED STRIKE

Monday morning dawned bright and clear. Mr. Conkling arose early. He had passed a sleepless night, wondering—wondering what the morrow had in store for him. Dudley had not joined the union, but the affair worried him considerably. He did not wish to be the cause or be held responsible for the proposed strike. He had several conferences with Mr. Conkling at each of which Dudley tried to get the editor to say what he should do, but each time Mr. Conkling told him to use his own judgment. However, Dudley concluded, from some disconnected remarks that Mr. Conkling had made, that the editor deemed it wise that the Printer's Union should be allowed to strike. Dudley decided that the owner of "The Knickerbocker" was of the opinion that the unionists would never be satisfied until they had struck and found out how poorly a strike secures results.

Rumors of the impending strike had been freely circulated on Saturday and Sunday, and they had been painfully disconcerting to Mr. Conkling who was sure that he had been doing more for his employees than he really could afford. He had muttered to himself repeatedly on Sunday:

"What do these fellows mean? How foolish they are! They certainly know not what they do. I can lock up my printshop for one, five, or ten years, and live comfortably, but these men have families and they'll need bread. No working-man can afford to lose three months' work, because he loses when he wins. We would not have any strikes were it not for the hotspurs, who little consider what the consequences may be."

Nevertheless the printer's strike was on. There was no doubt about it. All the printers' organizations had struck either in sympathy, or for some grievance real or fancied. The offices of "The Knickerbocker" were empty. Spiders were weaving their silken webs about the machinery of the linotype machines. The printers were expectantly marching up and

down the streets in groups awaiting developments. They wished to make sure that everything had stopped. When they were convinced that they had blocked the way, a knowing look of pleased satisfaction beamed from their countenances. It was, in truth, the old-time spirit of tyranny and force, of the battle belonging to the strong. They enjoyed immensely the discomfiture of their employer, the man without whom they could not exist. This employer may be greedy, avaricious, domineering, and unreasonable; still this same boss is, after all is said and done, the workman's staunchest and most needed friend.

The editorial staff of "The Knickerbocker" had remained at home through fear of personal violence. Mr. Conkling was unafraid, but he decided that it would be wise that he remain away from his office until the storm had subsided. Dudley alone was in charge.

The immediate cause of the strike was Mr. Conkling's positive refusal to dismiss Dudley Longden; the remote cause of the strike was the refusal of the editor to pay more money for fewer hours' work. War had unsettled the whole civilized world. It had made thousands of millionaires who still were exacting war profits; it had enabled the laboring man to live like a king, thereby causing him to be domineering and unreasonable; so both capital and labor now seemed to be in the same mental attitude: "Let the public be damned."

It was true that the war was over, but the world awoke the morning after with a bulging headache. It had not indulged in too many cocktails, but it had experienced some horrible dreams and a nerve-wracking nightmare. Now the dreadful orgy was over; however, the nerves of man and womankind had been shattered, and it had not yet convalesced to the point of normalcy. The world was not exactly intoxicated, but it had been fearfully intemperate in dissipating its energies, in squandering its billions, in its sacrifice of human life.

Yes, everything had been stopped by the strike of the Printer's Union. The idea of printing a four-page newspaper occurred to Dudley, and it forthwith appealed to him strongly. He called Mr. Conkling over the 'phone, and he immediately gave his consent. Dudley was pleased. He forthwith pulled off his coat and went to work. He wrote the editorials, arranged the display ads, set the type and ran the press. At

four o'clock the papers were ready for distribution, but the newsboys did not come—they, too, had struck in sympathy. Nevertheless Dudley was determined. He employed a half-dozen boys at two dollars each to sell the papers. Everybody bought one, for everybody was eager to see and eager to read what the paper had to say. Even the strikers bought them to see what they looked like.

After a thousand or so copies had been sold, the regular newsboy's organization, at the solicitation of the Printer's Union, waylaid and attacked this more recent contingent of news distributors. Red and Brownie were the leaders. They were a fearless pair, unafraid of man or ghosts. They were now meeting in a council of war to discuss the strike situation in an alley off of Broadway. At this particular interval Red had the floor and was gesticulating painfully as he said:

"Yes, we struck in sympathy fer them there printers, but who's a strikin' in sympathy fer us-uns? Don't we-uns deserve no sympathy, too?"

"I don't know about that, Red, but I guess not. Anyway, I don't go much on sympathy. It's poor diet. It's like eatin' hay. I'd rawther have a can of pork and beans."

"But, Brownie, sometimes sympathy gits you the pork and beans."

"Red, I'll tell you: I'd jist as soon have a basket of birds-nests as a bouquet of sympathy."

"That don't make no difference—our job's gone and the tother kids ere a-bankin' the money. This is a tough old world, hain't it?"

"I say, 'Dang this here strike business.' They've got us in a perty mess now, hain't they?"

"Don't these here strikers pay no benefits?"

"Benefits? How kin they? There hain't no money in the treasury."

"Them printers must be a crazy bunch, fer nobody but a crazy man would strike with no bread in the cupboard."

"I thought they struck so they could eat up the bread in the breadbox."

"Them bosses may be hogs, but they're not 'boobs,' I want to tell you."

"I was jist wonderin' if we was 'boobs,' too."

"One thing's certain, we hain't got no job, and I guess that a feller what hain't got no job must be a 'boob.'"

"What are we goin' to do? Jist let them fellers take our job without a fight? Why, they'll think we're a bunch of old women."

"I say, fight 'em, run 'em out."

"Well, let's do it; let's egsterminate 'em this very day."

"Red, you're arfully ignorant—that hain't the right word: you mean exterminate."

"I knowed that all the time—I jist wanted to see if you did. You bet we'll exterminate 'em—no, we'll not 'say it with flowers.'"

"Yep, the only way fer us to git satisfaction is to 'step on 'em'—air you ready?"

"Ready!"

"Have you got plenty of ammunition?"

"I got two pockets full of eggs and one of hard lemons."

"All right—give me some and we're off."

Red grabbed up some stones and pieces of bricks, and, followed by Brownie, rushed out of the alley shouting viciously as he approached two of the novices:

"Hey, you scabs, there! Air you a lookin' fer trouble er jist a black eye?"

"Give 'em ten minnetts, Red, to cash in."

"No, I'm not goin' to give 'em ten minnets—I'll jist give 'em five," answered Red irately.

"Don't you fellers know nothin'? Don't you know it's impolite to take another feller's job when he's a strikin'? Hain't you acquainted with the rules?" questioned Brownie in a loud voice and with emphasis.

"The novices paid no attention to Brownie's speech, and kept shouting:

"'Knickerbockers'—five cents."

This angered Red and Brownie more than if they had talked back, and Red shouted viciously:

"Hey! you boneheads! hain't you got no politeness? Hain't you had no raisin? Don't you know what is proper? Don't you know there hain't no strike-breakers in heaven? Don't you know a snake and a toad is better than a strike-breaker? Don't you know everybody is a watchin' us? Don't you know this here strike is the biggest thing in the world?"

"Oh, give us a rest, Red," answered one of the novices.

"Don't you know, 'Skinny,' that the bosses is a tryin' to give us a knockout? And don't you know we'll have to quit eatin' if they win?"

"Shut up, Redhead; you tend to your business and we'll tend to ours."

Red's temper now flared like a blow-torch. He answered:

"You d—d little whiffet, you come down the alley here, if you want to be put to sleep. You're nothin' but a scab, a coward, a strike-breaker, and a big hunk of nothin'. You'd rob yer mother-in-law, er a graveyard, er a poorhouse, er a Sunday school. I say come down the alley here if you want to see mornin'-glories and rainbows—come along, I say, if you have got any sand."

The novices now decided that it was time to go. The atmosphere was getting a little too torrid. So they made no reply and hurried away. But Red and Brownie followed them, and at every opportunity they pelted them with rotten lemons, tripped them, pushed them down, grabbed their paper bags and tore them up, rushed them down the alleys and smashed them on the nose and in the eye. Finally the half-dozen boys had been completely routed—they had been "egsterminated" literally. They slipped away home very much abused but very much wiser, while Red and Brownie, like game cocks, crowed lustily and triumphantly.

Dudley then employed other boys and sent them out into the residential district to sell. This was successful for a while, but reports of what was being done were quickly passed along by union sympathizers, and these boys, too, were soon hunted down by Red and Brownie and their gang of bandits who now were the terror of all newsboy strike-breakers.

After much walking they finally came upon another gang that was selling "Knickerbockers" in the residential district. Red shouted lustily:

"Brownie, you smash that one with the straw hat on, and I'll swat that one with the cap on."

"All right; you put yours to bed in Sleep Hollow, and I'll put mine to gatherin' wild flowers in the land of Timbuctoo."

The two novices ran like frightened deer, but Red and Brownie were fleet of foot and full of determination and self-confidence, and they soon caught up with them and pelted them with sticks and eggs, tore their papers into shreds, booted

them with vigor, sent them sprawling upon the ground, and finally started them bellowing down the street.

But in spite of all these scenes of terror, many papers were distributed. Red and Brownie could not be everywhere at the same time. It was the only paper printed in the city, and naturally it was in much demand. Mr. Conkling bought a copy with fear and trembling and many misgivings. He was almost afraid to read it lest he might be ashamed. He then censured and reproved himself caustically for giving his consent to such a wild and impractical idea. What could be expected of a farmer lad of twenty? It was folly to presume that a mere boy could edit a great metropolitan newspaper creditably. The whole newspaper world would now ridicule and make sport of him. He was annoyed, chagrined, mortified.

He finally summoned enough courage to read it. The first page wasn't so bad. It was, in truth, a newsy page, not at all spectacular or sensational, the two things which Mr. Conkling detested and disliked above everything else in a newspaper. All international happenings were not only cleverly condensed, but they were very readable. It undeniably indicated an intellectual grasp of world affairs that was, indeed, marvelous for a boy. Mr. Conkling then turned to the inside or editorial page. The first few editorials claimed his attention:

"What is the matter with labor? Has it gone mad? It is better paid, better housed, has fewer hours, and is more highly respected than ever before—what more can it expect?"

"Every boss, if he is a good citizen, will pay his employees so that they can live respectably, so they can by proper thrift have a home of their own, have decent clothes to wear, and have leisure to enjoy the better things of life.

"Every man has a perfect right to quit his job, if he isn't satisfied with his wages or his hours or his associates; but has he a moral, or even a legal right to force others to quit?"

"Capital is very often avaricious and greedy and domineering—so is labor. No human creature is perfect; so let's take a good look at ourselves—maybe we're partly to blame.

"The officers of some labor unions seem to be obsessed with the idea that they must agitate and keep things stirred up, else they will not be able to hold their position. This viewpoint is wrong. The average prosperity of all the members is the only true measure of any officer's tenure of office.

"The whole civilized world is steadily moving onward toward

one race and one language; and that race is the English race, and that language is the English language. The black man, the red man, the yellow man will eventually be absorbed. The white man may be slightly changed, but in the main the new race will be the white race, because it is the most virile and the most aggressive that has yet appeared upon the face of the earth.

"Civilization needs the Teuton. German culture and German learning are necessary to modern progress. The world cannot attain its best without the Teuton."

"Birth control is coming. Paupers and criminals should not be allowed to be the parents of children. The immoral and the illiterate should be governed by severe marital laws. No one, who has been sentenced to a jail, or a prison, or a penal farm should be permitted to rear a family. Again the size of every family should be directly dependent upon the income and morals and literacy of that family. The race needs pruning. The undesirables, like water sprouts in our orchards, ought to be destroyed and not allowed to propagate. Humaneness requires it; charity requests it; and the race demands it."

Mr. Conkling was strongly pro-English, but unions were now uppermost in his mind, and he did not notice the editorial illusion to Germany. Ordinarily it would have been bitterly assailed by both editor and the public, but at this time it passed unnoticed. Mr. Conkling was pleased, if not amazed at the intellectual grasp of Dudley Longden. He saw in him the making of a great man.

The unions were now intensely angered. They decided to beat this daring young farmer boy, if they did nothing else. The various advertisers of "The Knickerbocker" were seen at once, at which time the strike leaders served notice upon each of them that every union man in New York City would be instructed to boycott them, if they inserted another advertisement in "The Knickerbocker" before the demands of the strikers were acceded to. So on the following morning "The Knickerbocker" telephone kept up a ceaseless rattle; many advertisers were abruptly ordering their ads discontinued; others were more polite in their requests, saying diplomatically that they did not have time to prepare the copy; nevertheless the effect upon Dudley was the same—disheartening.

Dudley was naturally dispirited—everybody seemed to be

pulling against him. No one offered him any words of encouragement. Only six advertisers "stuck." After careful figuring he found that he would barely come out even on this business venture, if he charged nothing for his time. Thus, Mr. Conkling would lose nothing and he would have the experience; so he decided to continue the paper.

All that day Dudley received innumerable letters—threatening letters, Black Hand letters. Every mail brought an increased consignment, but Dudley was not easily frightened. It was Tuesday evening near dusk. A group of strikers gathered across the street from "The Knickerbocker" building. Stones at once began to hail upon the plate-glass front of the newspaper office. A large plate glass was shattered—broken into smithereens. The noise of the crash was appalling. It seemed as though Bedlam had certainly broken loose. The strikers ran. Dudley knew that it was the work of vandals—an irresponsible element which accompanies every strike as surely as confidence men and crooks accompany every circus. It is true that such things are not countenanced or sanctioned by the better and more conservative element of the labor unions. Dudley said nothing when the crash occurred, but he calmly set about nailing up the window with boards that he might keep out the wind, the water, and the desperadoes.

"The Knickerbocker," still a four-page paper, appeared on the second evening with its greatly reduced number of advertisers. The strikers were jubilant; but the paper was as well arranged as upon the first evening. Some of the radicals were not satisfied. They decided that they must resort to more drastic measures, that they must do something to completely stop this pestiferous publication. Dudley Longden was a shrewder intelligence than they had counted upon; he was fearless and he was able. The editorials on this second evening were as well written as upon the first evening, one of which read as follows:

"The allies must not now be too tyrannical with Germany. She is down and out, and she cannot pay until she gets up—nobody can milk a cow with any satisfaction while she's down. Let's all of us be men and stand for fair play."

The next day Dudley went to lunch at the customary time. Crowds of strikers were marching up and down the streets past the publishing houses. Bitterness was in their eyes and malice was in their hearts. They commenced holloaing "scab,"

"traitor," "crook," as soon as they saw Dudley coming on the opposite side of the street. Someway, the police were not there. They seemed to be busily engaged elsewhere. They may have been in sympathy. Two more groups of strikers, one in front of Dudley and one behind him, kept back the tide of pedestrians; but, unnoticed, a frail little girl of nine who was at Dudley's side was screened from view by him and was unnoticed by the strikers. A hailstorm of bricks and stones suddenly rained all about Dudley, and one struck him fair upon the forehead, and one struck the little girl near the heart. Both fell heavily to the sidewalk. Some of the strikers hooted, some laughed, some jollified, some ridiculed. It was Mr. Hyde that laughed, it was the brute in man that hooted, it was Satan that ridiculed, it was hell that jollified. No strike was ever won in this manner; on the contrary, many strikes have been lost by just such tactics. Public opinion will not countenance such things.

Many pedestrians quickly came to the assistance of the stricken. The little girl was limp and seemingly lifeless. Dudley, too, was unconscious, and blood was trickling down his face in rivulets. An ambulance was at once summoned, and they were hurried away to a hospital. The doctors forthwith pronounced the girl dead, but after a careful diagnosis they decided in Dudley's case that there was no concussion. However, when he had not yet rallied from his stupor on the following morning, they were nonplussed and alarmed.

Naturally, Mr. Conkling was depressed, grieved, sad, incensed. He would not have worried more had Dudley Longden been his own son. He not only provided the best medical and surgical talent that money could procure, but he 'phoned the hospital hourly relative to Dudley's condition. When he was informed on the following morning that Dudley had not yet aroused from his stupor, he was very sad. He was now opposed to and intensely angry at labor unions generally, pronouncing all of them bad. In fact, he was determined to beat the Printer's Union, no difference what the cost, or how great the sacrifice.

The doctors were fearful lest there might be a fracture. They were sure that there should be some signs of returning consciousness, if their patient was ever going to convalesce. However that afternoon Dudley's heart seemed a little stronger,

and his eyes had a little more luster, although he was still dazed and still in a stupor. The doctors, nevertheless, were encouraged. On the following day more palpable signs of returning consciousness were apparent. Mr. Conkling sent large vases of carnations, roses, daffodils or sweet peas daily. He wrote Grace as follows:

"Dear Grace:

Everything is going wrong. The printers are on a strike. Dudley attempted to edit the paper by himself, but this so angered the strikers that they struck him, and a little girl at his side, down in the street. Yesterday there seemed to be no chance for Dudley, but he now seems to be slowly convalescing. I fear the trouble is not yet over.

Grace, Dudley is a boy in ten thousand. He is the truest fellow that ever worked for me. I could trust him implicitly, and his intelligence in an emergency has been a revelation to me. I hope all will yet be well.

From your Father."

In two days Mr. Conkling received the following answer:

"Dear Papa:

I'm so sorry that you're having so much trouble. It will not be long until Robert will be with you. He'll take all these worries off your shoulders. You can safely leave everything in Robert's hands while you take a two-year vacation; and when you return, you'll find that your capital stock has been doubled during your absence.

Dudley may be honest and intelligent, but I never could like the boy, he's too careless about his dress, and he's too poorly groomed.

Love, from your daughter, Grace."

In another week Dudley was removed to his home. He was now recovering by leaps and bounds. Mr. Conkling was overjoyed. He continued to send flowers in great profusion to make plain his appreciation of Dudley's efforts in his behalf, and he frequently called upon him personally. Anna, too, came to see him one day, saying sympathetically, addressing Dudley who was now sitting up:

"How are you Dudley?"

"Very well, I guess," answered Dudley indifferently.

"I'm so sorry that this happened."

"Your union did it," answered Dudley caustically.

"No, Dudley, the union did not do it—you are mistaken—it was some wild-eyed enthusiast who did not have the interests of the union at heart."

"I firmly believe that every member of your union rejoiced when they learned that I had been hurt," answered Dudley bitterly.

"Dudley, you're unkind and unjust."

"Never mention Union to me again, Anna. Capital at times may be greedy and unjust, but it has never attempted anything like this. Still you want me to excuse the union, to join the union, when the union tried to spill my life-blood. I'll never do it. I'll never join such an organization, I say. I consider myself too good to ally myself with a gang of highwaymen."

"Dudley, you should be more charitable. You don't think for one moment that my father would do such a thing, do you?"

"I don't know anything about what your father would do."

"Of course papa wouldn't do such a thing, and you know he wouldn't."

"No, I don't know, Anna—I wish I did."

Anna now saw that Dudley was not only unfriendly, but bitter. The flame of love had flickered and died. The very atmosphere was cold and uninviting. Anna did not tarry. She, without ceremony, bid Dudley adieu, wishing that she had not called.

That same day at eventime the postman delivered a letter with a Waterloo, Ohio, post mark. Upon the front of the envelope was crudely scrawled with a lead pencil, "Mrs. Hiram Longden, New York City, care of 'The Knickerbocker.'" It was scarcely legible, but it had found its destination. It was a surprise. It made the whole household glad, and it read as follows:

"Dear Wife:

I've got back home agin. It was a tiresome trip. I'm so lonesome. You hain't been gone but eight weeks, but

it seems like eight years. I do wish youuns would come home.

Course I was glad to git back after my trip to New York, but somethin's wrong. Is it Hiram, er is it the rest of creation? When I reached home, the dog, as soon as he seed me, tucked his tail between his legs and run and hid; the chickens, they cackled and craned their necks and went flyin' to their roosts as if a chicken hawk was spiralin' overhead; and the horses, they kicked up their heels, snorted and run away from me. It seems that nobody loves me. Is it Hiram's fault? Is I out of tune, er is the rest of creation all crooked and crossways? From now on I'm goin' to be cheerful and generous, even though it costs me.

Modder, when ere you a comin' home? But, modder, I hain't a askin' you to come home fer my sake—not at all. You jist stay 'til you git good and ready to come, modder. I want to see you have a good time. I want to see you git young agin, jist like you was when I was a courtin' you nigh twenty-five years ago. Yes, I want you to have a good time, modder, and enjoy yourself and git young agin. This here is like 'solitary confinement,' but I kin endure it a lifetime, if it will make my sweetheart young again, jist like you was when I used to make wreaths out of clover blooms and put 'em on yer head.

I'm sending you two hundred dollars, modder. Buy yourself somethin' with one hundred dollars of it; then buy Dudley a suit of clothes, tony ones—Dudley's a great boy, and I want him to shine. That there boy could entertain the Kaiser and not half try. Then buy the rest of the childrens twenty dollars' worth of chocolates and some shoes—spend every cent of it before you stop. I've been a thinkin', and I hain't found out yit what the blasted stuff is good fer, if hit hain't good to spend.

Life's so short, modder. Let's be cheerful and happy and gay. The first cold spell what comes, I'll send you some dressed chickens by parcels post, and when I butcher, I'll send you the tenderloins.

Goodby, modder, with lots of love from

fodder."

When the mother had finished reading the letter aloud, the entire family was in tears. In truth the Longdens were dazed, dumfounded, nonplussed. Not one of them could believe his senses. Dudley suddenly forgot his illness, grabbed his mother by the arms, kissed her repeatedly, and then waltzed her around the room a full half-dozen times. The rest of the children soon joined the procession.

XXIII

MR. CONKLING AND ROBERT

February with its snow, its cold, and its biting north winds held New York in its grip. The printers' strike had been arbitrated, the "fall vacations" were over. The strikers had gone back to work at the old schedule. Dudley, too, had now returned to "The Knickerbocker" offices. Mr. Conkling had advanced him—had made him associate editor. In order that any further friction might be avoided, it was mutually agreed that Dudley should never again operate a linotype machine.

Robert Tadmire had been, since January first, an employee of "The Knickerbocker." He was a very valuable man in his own estimation. He glided and sailed through the various offices as serenely as a barn swallow. He spoke as one having authority, and officiously assumed the role of general manager. Mr. Conkling viewed the young popinjay with a feeling of disgust, seasoned with dislike, but for his daughter's sake, he forebore and said nothing. He was firmly of the opinion that such fellows sooner or later dig their own graves, and he especially hoped it would prove true in this instance.

One morning in late February when Dudley was looking after some outside business, Robert chestily and boldly entered Mr. Conkling's private office, without even a rap at the door, saying:

"Mr. Conkling, there's too much running around during office hours by 'The Knickerbocker' employees, and I've decided to stop it."

"For instance."

"Why Dudley Longden doesn't stay in his office half of the time, and I'm going to put a stop to it."

"Do you mean that he loafs during office hours?"

"I do."

"I grant you that loafing during office hours is serious and ought not to be tolerated."

"I'll bet you I'll stop it. It's no wonder that 'The

Knickerbocker' doesn't clean up two million a year instead of one."

"Not too fast, Mr. Tadmire."

"Why not cure the patient now? Why dally?"

"Do you absolutely know that Dudley is a loafer?"

"Sure—where is he right now?"

"I sent him out on some special business."

"I'd look after all such matters for you without extra charge, and I'd thereby give you the benefit of my college training with no extra cost to you."

"I certainly thank you for your kindness."

"A college man can handle a business transaction so much more diplomatically, you know, than a farmer boy."

"No, I didn't know that."

"Besides, I have decided that 'The Knickerbocker' offices need a more up-to-date system; and, as soon as I can get to it, I'm going to re-arrange the entire establishment, so that all business transactions of a hundred dollars or more will receive my O. K. before they are binding."

"I presume you will do me the courtesy of allowing me to see your plan before you inaugurate it."

"If you wish, I will."

"I most assuredly wish it."

"Your methods are antiquated, Mr. Conkling, while nowadays everything is progressive."

"You are very frank in your likes and dislikes."

"I shall not make any radical changes before tomorrow."

"I repeat that I presume that the proprietor would not be intruding, should he ask to be consulted before these changes are made."

"No, I presume you would be entitled to that consideration; still, if the success or failure of this paper is going to rest upon my shoulders, I feel that I should have a free and untrammelled right to do as I please."

"The sport department, I believe, is your field, and I shall watch with eagerness and pride your rise in this field. I should never think of burdening you, however, with the momentous task of looking after the Sport Department and that of general manager, too."

Robert, subconsciously knew that he had been 'set upon,' but he could not understand why. He was amazed at Mr. Con-

klings's seeming indifference in the very presence of wisdom; and, finally, he queried:

"Isn't my work satisfactory, Mr. Conkling?"

"Oh, I guess it is passable," answered the editor without enthusiasm.

"Have you any suggestions?"

"Yes, I have one; always print the truth."

"Haven't I?"

"A portion of the time you have not only guessed at the truth, but you have guessed wrong."

"That happens in every newspaper office."

"It doesn't happen very often in 'The Knickerbocker' offices, Mr. Tadmire. When you are guessing, always say that this is the guess of the sport editor."

"Very well; I'll remember that inasmuch as it is your wish."

"You're very considerate."

"Does this paper ever accept bribes?"

"Never. Be courteous to everybody, but always print the truth."

"If John Jones offered you five thousand dollars for a puff, why not accept it?"

"Because we have advertising space to sell John Jones for just such purposes; and in this space he can do his own 'puffing' at more reasonable rates."

"But it would not be as effective."

"The personal opinions of the editors of 'The Knickerbocker' are not for sale—they are honest convictions and cannot be bought with gold or silver."

"I did not know that a newspaper had convictions—I, I mean I thought newspapers sold out to the highest bidder."

"Not always."

"Really, I can see nothing wrong with giving a fellow a boost and charging him for it."

"How do you know that the fellow merits a boost? We haven't time to trace a fellow's movements and motives back to his genesis."

Robert now saw that he was making no progress, that he could not cope with Mr. Conkling in an argument even though his system of running a newspaper was antiquated, but he ventured another question:

"Do you believe in besmirching a man's reputation?"

"Not unless he has besmirched it himself."

"What good does it do even then?"

"The same good that the truth does the public on every or any subject."

"I never could see what good it did to kick a fellow after he's down."

"Just the same amount of good that it does to punish a fellow criminally after he has committed a crime—it acts as a deterrent to other criminals."

Robert again changed the subject by inquiring:

"Are you acquainted with Dudley Longden's past?"

"I know very little about Dudley Longden."

"He has little to recommend him."

"Just what do you mean by that—be more specific."

"I'd rather not answer—he was a playmate of mine, you know."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, I knew Dudley and his parents quite well."

"He has a responsible position with me; and, if his past is tainted or clouded, I should like to know it."

"Well, I'll tell you this much, Mr. Conkling: had his father not intervened, Dudley would have been arrested for stealing books."

"He was generally regarded as a thief?"

"Yes, in that community."

"Why didn't he buy his books?"

"That's the question."

"His father gave him all the money that he wanted?"

"I presume."

"His father was generous?"

"Yes, he was considered very generous."

"You say that you knew him quite well?"

"I knew him well."

"He was an educated man and believed in education?"

"Yes, he was an enthusiast along this line."

"The father got along well with his family? They loved him and he loved them?"

"Yes."

"Then Dudley deserves dismissal after he has been given the severest reprimand that can be administered. You would advise it?"

"It would certainly be just."

"Then you tarry around here until Dudley returns and

we'll hold a court of inquiry—I want you for my star witness."

"No, no, no! Never! I'll never do anything like that. Don't you dare to even mention my name."

"That's strange; here's a fox in the chicken-house, and you won't help me catch him."

"My early acquaintance with Dudley forbids."

"Then you care less for the success, the ultimate success of 'The Knickerbocker' than you care for your boyhood friendships?"

"Anyway, I refuse to act as the incriminating witness."

"Why? I can't see why. You've told me the truth, haven't you?"

"Most assuredly, but I've told you why I do not wish to be implicated."

"The point is simply here: 'The Knickerbocker' offices are run on a high plane of honor, and the fellow who doesn't measure up, must go."

"But, Mr. Conkling, you simply must not use my name."

"How could I handle the case unless I used your name? I could not dismiss him summarily without giving him some reason. No one ought to convict a young man on intangible, hearsay, or moonshine evidence."

"If you should implicate me, I should be compelled to deny that I said it."

"What! What did you say? Why, you amaze me."

"I have given you my reasons."

Then you should not make charges, if you're not willing to stand behind them. Any boy who has a generous, considerate father should not steal, and if he does steal, he should not hold a responsible position in 'The Knickerbocker' offices."

"I grant it; in fact, if I were you, I'd 'fire' him."

"Your position in this matter is certainly unique; you want to see Dudley dismissed, but you refuse to take any part in it."

"My position is simply this: Dudley Longden is not a big enough man to be an editor's assistant."

"Now you're talking about an entirely different matter; bigness, as you use it, refers to ability, but the charges that you made against Dudley were matters of right and wrong. One has to do with capacity and intellectual grasp, while the other has to do with morals and integrity. I believe I am

competent to pass on the former, but the latter I'm unable to pass upon without the facts."

"I have given you a 'tip,' now you can use your judgment."

"You have no ulterior motive?"

"None whatsoever."

"Just what, then, is your intent?"

"I merely want to help you clean house."

"That person makes a poor housecleaner who refuses to use one of the brooms, when the house needs cleaning."

"Anyway, I do not wish to be a party to Dudley's dismissal, and I feel that my reasons are perfectly sane."

"Dudley certainly displayed remarkable courage and loyalty during the printers' strike."

"Any American boy would have done the same thing."

"Then why didn't they? No other newspaper was printed in New York except the one that Dudley printed. The other newspaper offices have boys."

"Anyway the World War proved that every American boy is a hero when the occasion demands it."

"What did Dudley do with the books he stole?"

"Read them and returned them."

"Oh, he just stole them for a little while?"

"Yes, it's my understanding that he returned them; but if he stole them for five minutes, it was stealing just the same."

"I'd call that splitting hairs. Besides, I can't understand why Dudley should steal a series of books to read and then return them to the owner unsoiled, if his father was such a generous fellow. That story sounds queer to me."

Robert winced, after which his soul was stirred with anger, and he retorted:

"I trust you are not doubting my word."

"I'm not doubting anybody's word, but I have a right to form my own conclusions, and this one is simply this: any boy who is ambitious enough to steal books for self-improvement, certainly has my profound respect."

"Then you condone thievery? You not only excuse it, but congratulate the fellow that practices it?"

"In this case, yes."

"That's certainly a dangerous policy to advocate, Mr. Conkling. Any kind of thievery can be excused on such grounds."

"Nevertheless, with your consent, I'll respect that young man who is ambitious to get books 'somehow,' 'some way,' that he may

satisfy the yearning of his soul for knowledge, if by so doing he harms no one."

"You know he is a German?"

"There are lots of patriotic Germans in the United States.

"But Dudley is a German sympathizer."

"How do you know?"

"Didn't I live on the farm that joined that of his father's for sixteen years? Haven't I heard Dudley talk? Haven't I heard him swear eternal allegiance to the Fatherland?"

"I don't know it—no—and I don't believe it."

"Have you not noticed that wire pin that he wears?"

"Yes, I have. However, I'm not convinced."

"Anyway that pin is his pledge to the Kaiser."

"You did wear one of gold."

"I did, but I have changed my mind. I was mislead, misinformed. I learned the truth of the whole diabolical business and repented."

"Perhaps, Dudley, too, has repented."

"I have nothing more to say—you have the 'tip.'"

"Dudley's course while in my employ has been absolutely above reproach."

"Mr. Conkling, I've told you all of this for your own good, but as I said, I repeat: I do not want my name used in connection with anything that you say to Dudley."

"You're not jealous of Dudley's advances, are you?"

"No sir, I'm not."

Robert hesitated. He seemed to be in doubt relative to something. He regarded the floor intently. However he quickly recovered and said:

"Say, Mr. Conkling, my money's all tied up in securities that will not mature for a couple months yet; I wondered if you would advance me five hundred dollars."

"It would be contrary to my rule."

"I'll repay you soon."

"No other employee has ever asked such a favor of me. I try to pay all of my employees enough money so they will not have to borrow money of anyone."

"It's humiliating to me to ask you, I assure you. It's something I've never done before, but a combination of circumstances has driven me to it."

"You would want me to take a hundred dollars out each week?"

"No, no, Mr. Conkling. I'd rather repay you in a lump sum—say, in thirty days. I'll have a bunch of interest coming in within sixty days at the outside."

"When do you want the money?"

"Now, Mr. Conkling, if it is convenient."

"I'll break my rule in this one instance, if borrowing money isn't a practice of yours."

"It isn't."

Mr. Conkling did not reply, wheeled about in his office chair, wrote a check for five hundred dollars, and handed the same to young Tadmire just as Dudley entered Mr. Conkling's office to make a special report on the business that had been assigned to him. Robert excused himself pompously, went directly to his desk where he presumably was soon hard at work.

It was now quitting time. The roar and the thunder of the big press had ceased and was resting from its labors after having turned out a half a million papers. Dudley was just quitting "The Knickerbocker" building. Susan was waiting for him at the entrance, and as he approached, she accosted him:

"How are you feeling, Dudley?"

"Oh, I'm all right, Susan."

"I haven't seen you since you were hurt."

"Oh, I've forgotten all about that little incident."

"These unions are made up of brutal fellows."

"Still, they're not all brutal. There are lots of good fellows in all unions."

"Like every other organization, I suppose the bad will slip in sometimes."

"Heard from home recently?"

"Not a word. In fact I'm getting sick for some news."

"You know that mother is staying with me this winter?"

"Someone told me that, but I had forgotten it."

"That certainly makes it fine for me; I'm enjoying life very much nowadays."

"I understand that Mr. Conkling has made you associate editor."

"Yes, he has, Susan."

"I'm so sorry, Dudley, that I allowed Robert to interfere with our social relations."

"Oh, that's all right, Susan—don't worry about that."

"But you never come to see me any more."

"Oh, I'm so very busy, Susan; but some day I'll see you."

"Can't you come this evening, Dudley? I'm homesick."

"I couldn't come this evening, Susan."

"Tomorrow evening?"

"I have an engagement for tomorrow evening, too; but some day I'll call upon you, Susan."

"Goodby, Dudley," answered Susan tearfully, for she was sorely disappointed.

Dudley started hastily on, when he was suddenly waylaid by Robert who was standing in a doorway waiting for him. As soon as he had caught the step, he queried:

"Dudley, my money is all tied up in securities, and I'll not be able to realize upon them for a few months. I need some ready cash—could you spare a friend a couple hundred for a month or two?"

"Yes, I'll accommodate you, Robert—I'm sure you would do the same for me if I needed help. Besides, I know that you would boost for me and stand up for me, if someone should abuse me in your presence and my absence. So I certainly will let you have the money, but when do you want it?"

"Not later than in the morning, Dudley."

"Very well, I'll have it for you; I'll not need it for four or five weeks."

"Dudley, I'm going to Belmont in the morning on the first train."

"To Belmont?"

"Yes, Mr. Conkling wants me to go."

"On business?"

"Oh, you're slow, Dudley—Mr. Conkling wants me to go on a special mission; he wants me to call upon his daughter. You know that Grace is in school there; and she, too, has commanded me to come, and of course, I'm going."

"I'm not very well acquainted with Grace."

"She's certainly a queen—the dearest, dandiest girl that I ever knew."

"Why don't you drive your machine?"

"Oh, my machine is 'jimmied'—it's got sand in the gear box,' I guess. But I'm not going to buy a new one until I get my returns from my securities, and then I fear that Mr. Conkling will want me to use his car instead of buying a new one."

"Robert, I simply would not drive another man's car for a thousand dollars."

"Why not?"

"Because, to be honest with you, it's 'nervy'; because it presumes too much; because there's too much danger of having an accident."

"You're too finicky, Dudley. Mr. Conkling wouldn't like it, should I refuse to use his car?"

"I fear you're not acquainted with Mr. Conkling."

"Perhaps you do not know that I soon will be one of the family."

"Indeed! No, I didn't know that—congratulations!"

"Thanks! yes, the entire family is in love with me."

"Anyway let me tell you my discovery and you can use it or not use it as you see fit: Mr. Conkling is a princely fellow, but he's unbelievably shrewd. He reads your thoughts and analyzes your motives in the twinkle of an eye. He believes in hard work and he believes in system—yes, he's a crank on system—and, let me emphasize the following: he asks no favors of anyone and he grants but few. Now draw your own conclusions and act accordingly."

"Grace does as she pleases."

"True, she's his daughter."

"And I'll soon be his son-in-law."

"That's fine; however, remember this Robert, Mr. Conkling is a perfect gentleman at all times and in all places. When he dismisses an employee, he does it diplomatically and very politely. He never storms, he never raves or pulls his hair, he doesn't resort to abuse or unkind words; on the contrary, you'd think that he was about to weep when he solemnly leads you to the back door and boots or pushes you out."

At this juncture Robert and Dudley parted. The truth of it was: young Tadmor had borrowed money of every employee about the office, although he had been there less than sixty days. He always gave them his business card with an "I. O. U." and the amount written plainly on the back of it as an acknowledgment of the obligation. A young spendthrift is like unto a toboggan going downhill; it gains momentum as it goes, and stopping is practically impossible unless there is a collision and a disaster.

XXIV

A DINNER PARTY

A dinner party was in progress in New York, on a fine evening in May. Robert Tadmire was the presiding host. He had invited Grace Conkling, Helen Hunt, and a half-score of other young ladies with their masculine friends to dine with him. It was a pretentious affair. The caterers were the swellest, the American beauties were the reddest, and the menu was the best that New York could furnish.

After dinner, in accordance with the invitation, the entire party went to Floradora, which was just now enjoying its second wave of popularity. Robert, although a bankrupt, was still a prodigal spender and never allowed expenses to stand in the way of a good time. He liked to be on the band wagon—he really enjoyed the distinction of being the center of attraction, so he naturally enjoyed being host.

As heretofore Robert was well dressed—he was, in fact, dressed in the pink of fashion. He considered himself the beau of New York society, and it was his practise to smile buoyantly and knowingly at all the well-dressed young ladies whom he met upon the street, even though they were strangers to him. Neither did he hesitate to carry on extended flirtations with them—few seemed to resent the questionable familiarity. It is indeed strange how any well-dressed youth can so easily win the favor of so many presumably good women at sight. Is womankind “slipping”? Or is woman naturally indiscreet? Or is it a question of morals?

Robert had commodious and well-furnished rooms at “The Tavern,” which was the best bachelor’s hall in New York. It was furnished with every convenience. It was equipped with electric fans that made winter out of summer, and a heating device that made summer out of winter; it had a mammoth library, countless servants, the latest magazines; ice-water, hot, cold, shower, and Turkish baths; anything to drink and everything to smoke; and all of those other con-

veniences which make the life of a bachelor a dream, and a perpetual delight.

After the theater, Robert escorted his guests to the cafe of his fashionable bachelor's hall, where there had been prepared and prearranged a little to eat, much music, and many flowers. Here, too, were present several other parties of stylishly dressed, expensively garbed ladies. Here smartly dressed people congregated to see and to be seen by smartly dressed people. In truth it was an emporium of fashion. The service was faultless and etiquette was queen.

After lunch, and after the party had seen and been seen, it departed by automobile for Belmont at two A. M. It was a gay, chattering throng. Robert, accompanied by Grace, acted as pacemaker the first twenty miles, after which he bid his guests adieu 'mid many felicities and good wishes.

The following morning Robert reached his office at nine five. He looked jaded, almost as jaded as he did the morning following "The Feast of Belshazzar." He was truly enervated, and he yawned audibly a half-score of times before he was seated at his desk. The world was drab. "The Knickerbocker" offices seemed to be a cheerless place. He had a headache—a bursting headache—a champagne headache. He was weary of work. He hated work. He hated the word "duty." He regarded it as an unmistakable misfortune that he was not a man of wealth and leisure. He denominated this a cruel world. Anyway no white man ought to be awakened so early as nine A. M. to go to work. He had had no breakfast, and he cared for none. He was nauseated and was dispirited. He had lost interest in his work as sport editor. It was now a tough old grind. Enthusiasm was gone—drudgery had come. Why should he be compelled to struggle along against the current in this fashion? Was he not a member of the Conkling family? At least he soon would be. Could he not, as a consequence, do as he pleased? Come when he pleased? Go when he pleased? Work when he pleased? He would certainly enjoy that sort of an arrangement. He decided to speak to Mr. Conkling about it.

Mr. Conkling with a keen eye and an ominous frown had been watching Robert for some fifteen moments. He saw him yawn repeatedly. He, while sitting in his commodious office chair, thought of him as his son-in-law—the idea was revolting. He regarded his listless attitude—he was filled with dis-

gust. He noticed his dissipated countenance—the fires of hate at once were kindling. He thought of his hatred of work—he was stirred with bitterness. He remembered how inefficient the sport department of his paper had been—he was humiliated, but this quickly changed to anger. In truth he knew that the sport department of “The Knickerbocker” was a joke, that the other cosmopolitan newspapers spoke of it slightly and with ridicule. He knew too well that it lacked up-to-date-ness, aggressiveness and novelty. He also knew that the news had been stale, that the write-ups had been tame, that the reports had been inaccurate. All this now quickly coursed through Mr. Conkling’s mind. His nerves gave him the fidgets. He could endure it no longer. He could not control his thoughts or his feelings. He casually meandered over to where Robert was sitting. Robert was about to address him regarding his having a little more freedom, when Mr. Conkling said:

“I noticed that you were late this morning.”

“Yes, five minutes.”

“If you are permitted to come five minutes late, why should not the rest of the employees have the same liberty? You simply nullify my system.”

“I presumed that you would not be so exacting with a head of a department.”

“Why not? Should they not set the example of punctuality?”

“It seems to me that from ten until four o’clock of intensive work is quite enough brain work for any master mind.”

“I’ll close my offices before I’ll ever permit any such hours. All the employees would at once demand like hours, and I’ll not ‘stand for it.’ Every employee of ‘The Knickerbocker’ must be here when the clock strikes nine.”

“I’ll make up the time.”

“I don’t ask you to make up the time. I don’t want you to make up the time, but I believe that I have a perfect right to expect every member of my staff to be punctual. I myself didn’t feel like coming down this morning at nine, but I came simply for the reason that I ask nothing of my employees that I am not willing to do myself.”

“I did not suppose that I would be placed in the same category as the janitor.”

“The janitor has ambitions the same as you. He has feeling

the same as you. He has plans the same as you; and he has rights the same as you."

"I'll be here when the clock strikes nine hereafter—if I'm half dead I'll be here," answered Robert crabbedly.

"Whenever you are half dead, you'll do me an honor if you'll remain at home. Here's the whole matter in a nutshell; I must have a system; I certainly have a right to expect the enthusiastic help of my ten-thousand-dollar editors in my efforts to make that system as nearly perfect in its functioning as is possible; I expect nothing less, I ask nothing more."

"Very well."

"I know exactly what your trouble is, and why you were late this morning."

"What do you know?"

"I know that you were out until almost four o'clock this morning, drinking highballs and dissipating your energies. That's exactly why you feel so bad this morning. It is not work, it is dissipation that makes you feel so stupid."

"How do you know what I did last night?"

"I know. Don't you think I know?"

"Yes."

"I can tell you who were there. Robert, no one can stay out all night and work all day. The human machine simply will not stand the strain."

Robert hung his head and answered not. He was discomfited, chagrined. Several employees were listening. Mr. Conkling wanted them to hear. That was one reason that he was delivering these chastising words semi-publicly. He continued:

"Another thing, Robert, your department is the poorest in 'The Knickerbocker' offices."

"You are rather plain spoken."

"I expect service, very efficient service, too, of a fellow to whom I pay ten thousand dollars a year. This is not a kindergarten or a lover's lane, where high-priced gentlemen play hide-and-go-seek with the girls—it's a place for work, intelligent work, effective, diligent work, I say."

"I'm doing my best."

"God pity your worst."

"You certainly expect a whole lot."

"No fellow can drink champagne and eat lunches at two

A. M. and be ready for work at nine A. M. I expect my employees to retire not later than eleven o'clock."

"You did not employ me," answered Robert undiplomatically.

"Anyway, it seems that I'm paying you."

"I'll take this matter up with Grace—I wish to know who my employer is."

Mr. Conkling, as we have said, was unusually conservative, courteous, even-tempered; however, in this instance his horses broke the hitch-rein and ran away with him. He had said more to "Belshazzar" than he intended; but this namesake of an Oriental king had so much and so often trodden upon his laws of order and system, that he became exasperated with the young spendthrift, and the safety fuse melted.

He now hesitated: on one hand, he did not wish to embarrass his daughter, on the other hand, he firmly and unequivocally resolved that he would not retreat. He did not intend that such consummate impudence should go unrebuked; so he answered tartly:

"I respect my daughter's tastes, opinions and wishes in everything except the quality of the work that goes into 'The Knickerbocker.' Here I am supreme, and I allow no human being, be he male or female, advertising manager or sport editor, to interfere with or thwart my purposes."

A young man was now waiting at Mr. Conkling's elbow. He wished to see Robert. Mr. Conkling turned and recognized the young fellow as a collector for one of New York's leading florists. He had in his hand what purported to be a bill. It was in truth, a bill of three figures and bordered on four. It was a part of the cost of the extravagance of last night. Mr. Conkling intuitively understood, and turned and walked away. Robert explained to the young man confidentially, after the editor had taken his leave:

"Mr. Conkling is a crank—an implacable crank, if I must say it, even though he soon will be my father-in-law. Yes, he's unbelievably exacting. I fear he's some relation to Shylock, of whom you've probably heard a great deal. The point is simply this: private business is strictly forbidden during office hours, so I'll be compelled to settle with you later."

"I shall and my boss will insist upon a settlement before sunset this evening," answered the florist pointedly.

"You certainly shall have your money before sunset."

The florist turned and hurried away, but before he reached the door, he met the caterer and one of the musicians, the mission of both of whom was the same as that of the florist. A few rods behind followed the haberdasher and the landlord, all moving aggressively forward in straight lines, with bills in hand, toward Mr. Robert Tadmores desk. They quickly lined up in front of the flamboyant young spendthrift. Robert was truly embarrassed. Heretofore he had always been able to juggle and evade accounts of this character; but never before had he been besieged by a whole procession of creditors at one sitting; never before had he been attacked en masse. In chess the predicament would be styled "checkmated." Excuses failed Robert. He was truly speechless. His countenance was ashen. His mind, owing to the dissipation of the preceding night, was not working. So he was nonplussed.

Finally Mr. Conkling, hearing the noise of shuffling feet and the symphony of many voices, came to his office door to ascertain what it was all about. His deep-seated dislike for young Tadmores was becoming more and more pronounced, and his countenance was always a perfect barometer of his likes and dislikes. Anyone could now read Mr. Conkling's opinion of Robert Tadmores from a distance. He unconsciously muttered:

"That hilarious spendthrift has never paid me a cent on that five hundred that he owes me, and still he pays more than a thousand dollars in a single evening for flowers and bon bons and entertainment. He has a millionaire's appetite and a struggling editor's income."

Robert was now explaining to his creditors, and Mr. Conkling heard the explanation:

"Gentlemen, I simply must not be annoyed with bills during office hours. Mr. Conkling is unremittingly opposed to it, and I agree that it certainly is disengaging. I shall see each of you personally after office hours."

"What are your office hours?" queried the haberdasher.

"From nine until five o'clock, sir," answered Robert decisively.

"I'll be waiting for you outside the door," interposed the landlord.

"So will I," agreed the musician.

"That will be perfectly all right with me, but don't bother

me any longer now—I have much work to do,” answered Robert waspishly.

After the procession of creditors had retired, Robert accosted Dudley as he was passing:

“Just a moment, Dudley.”

“What is it, Robert?”

“I need three hundred dollars—in fact, I must have it. I say that I want to borrow three hundred dollars right now.”

“You haven’t paid back the three hundred that you borrowed in February.”

“But I will—you know that I will. You also know that my expenses have been enormous.”

“Yes, I know—I probably know too much.”

“Are you doubting my integrity?”

“No, but I was wondering why you had not paid back the three hundred as you promised.”

“It seems to me that a schoolmate ought to help a schoolmate without asking any questions.”

“I thought you had some interest due on securities a month or two since.”

“I did have but some inaccuracies, which required extra time, had to be straightened out.”

“What do you want to do with the money?”

“Now, Dudley, you’re getting impertinent.”

“Right here’s the point, Robert: your pace is too swift for your income. You can’t afford it. Nobody can afford to expend sixty dollars a day when he’s earning only thirty.”

“Now, Dudley, that’s none of your business.”

“But it is my business. I have a perfect right to know what you’re going to do with my money, and I have a right to know how soon I’m going to get my money back.”

“If it’ll be any solace to you, I’ll tell you that I owe some obligations.”

“Obligations! Obligations! I have no outstanding obligations.”

“Of course not—you don’t mingle.”

“Now, Robert, for the sake of old times, I’m going to loan you this money, although my better judgment tells me not to do it. I really need all the money that I have, but I guess I’ll let you have it. However, I shall expect you to pay it back within thirty days.”

“I may pay it back Saturday.”

"I hope so, Robert, but I don't expect it—I saw your line-up of creditors this morning, and I must say that it was not a very pleasing review."

"It was, indeed, mortifying, Dudley. It was terrible, but it was simply one of those unfortunate coincidences that happen to everyone once in a lifetime."

"Now, Robert, remember! I'll have to have this money within thirty days without fail, so you give me an order on Mr. Conkling for three hundred dollars due in thirty days."

"I'll do nothing of the sort. Am I a crook or a trickster or a 'buncoer' that you should ask or even hint at such a thing as an order on Mr. Conkling?"

"Robert, I tell you I haven't the money to spare. I fear you do not appreciate the fact that I am making a tremendous sacrifice to accommodate you."

"I appreciate all of that—you've already told me that four times—but to whom would I go for a favor if not to a person whom I have known all my life?"

"I guess I'll let you have it."

"I thank you. I'd like to have it now."

Dudley reached for his pocketbook, took out a certificate for three hundred dollars, indorsed it, handed it to Robert, and indifferently passed on. Robert took it greedily and consigned it to his pocketbook, but no words of gratitude escaped his lips.

That afternoon Robert wrote Grace as follows:

"Dear Grace:

Your father has been 'barnstorming' all day, all because I was five minutes late this morning. I simply can't please him. He frankly told me that the sport department was unsatisfactory—the poorest in his paper. Of course I don't have to endure such insolence, and I'm not going to. He allows Dudley to come and go whensoever he pleases; but, somehow, he has taken a 'dislikin'' to me. Have you any influence? Or shall I resign?

Love from
Robert."

Grace seemed to be The Court of Appeals in this case, for she also received the following letter from her father in the same mail that she received the one from Robert:

"Dear Grace:

I am informed that you and Helen and several other budding collegians were the guests of Robert Tadmores last evening, that you stayed until two A. M., that you returned to Belmont by auto at that late hour. Now, Grace, I do not approve of this. In the first place it was indiscreet on your part, in the second place Mr. Tadmores cannot afford to finance such extravagant functions, and in the third place it interferes with the quality of Mr. Tadmores's work. All day long he has been besieged by an unpleasing procession of creditors who were collecting for the prodigality of last evening.

Personally I do not believe that young Tadmores has any money, except his salary and what he can borrow. So, Grace, your duty is plain; namely, to help him to conserve instead of urging him to expend. Dudley Longden is worth a whole gross of Tadmores.

From your
Father."

Grace answered Robert as follows:

"Dear Robert:

I am writing papa very frankly this evening, but remember this, Robert: papa is a perfect crank on system. He expects not only me, when I'm in the office, but every other employee to be on time all the time, because of the influence it may have upon the other employees. Besides, papa expects every department of his paper to measure up to the highest standard of excellence, and he is an Incurable.

No, Robert, there is no hope for a reversal of his decision, if he thinks 'The Knickerbocker' has been compromised in the least. His paper is the pride of his heart, and he expects everything in it to be of the very highest excellence.

With regards from
Grace."

Then Grace wrote her father as follows:

"Dear papa:

I'm certainly grieved to learn that you delight in 'picking' at Robert. He is far superior to Dudley Longden in both mentality and brilliancy; and you couldn't

convince me otherwise in a thousand years. I could not like Dudley Longden in a whole lifetime of trying. Why, his clothes are disreputable—and his whiskers! and his hair! He's a full-fledged Bolshevik. The lad even lacks animation and common sense. Robert is my choice, and if you wish to worry your daughter until she's sick, just keep on chastising Robert for trivialities that are of no consequence.

Truly,

Grace."

XXV

GRACE AND HER FATHER

Graduation day had come and gone. Ten days since Grace and Robert had received their diplomas. Grace's thoughts were now tintured with sadness. She now fully realized that there would be no more ridiculous class plays, no more staging of *The King's Jesters*, no more dramatizing of the modern suffragette, no more chafing-dish and fudge parties at Belmont, no more athletic meets, no more sorority *tete-a-tetes*—all these endearing occasions were forever gone, and the resultant was a depressing sadness.

Grace was completely lost. She now had nothing to look forward to—her college days were ended. A new world confronted her. She approached it with dread and doubt. It was a real world, a cold, indifferent world, a world of the survival of the fittest.

Grace was now functioning as her father's private secretary. She was not there at her father's request—it was her wish. She was sure that mingling with people would, in a large measure, atone for her loss of college friends and college pleasures. However, her father made it plain to her that she, if she wished to be his private secretary, must observe the same hours and the same rules as the other employees for the sake of discipline. His ideas of system and discipline must be rigidly respected; for in these he would accept no compromise.

Helen Hunt, too, assisted her father in his jewelry store. She lived immediately across the street from the Conklings, and the two girls were inseparable. Each rode with the other to their offices and each accompanied the other back home again. One fine June morning Helen remarked as the two were en route to their work:

"Dudley Longden seems to be a dependable sort of a fellow."

"That's what papa says, but frankly, I can't like the boy. He's too slouchy, too stingy, too parsimonious. He doesn't

do himself justice. He doesn't spend enough money for clothes."

"I've often wondered why he didn't dress better—does his salary forbid?"

"Papa says that he now receives a hundred dollars a week."

"A miser, eh? Boo! deliver me."

"If he should expend a dollar for a box of chocolates, he wouldn't sleep for a week."

"I imagine that his father before him was stingy."

"So papa says. The boy left home because his father wouldn't give him any spending money."

"What is his father's occupation?"

"Farming."

"Nevertheless, the lad deserves considerable credit for his rapid promotions—isn't he business manager of 'The Knickerbocker'?"

"Yes, I guess he is. Papa thinks that he's a peach, but I can't see anything but pumpkin. Robert Tadmire is my type of fellow."

"Oh, sure; Robert is a prince."

"Yes, he's a swell fellow, and he has dash and style and breeziness."

"I imagine that Mr. Longden would be a monotonous person to live with."

"Oh, I guess he's smart enough, but he isn't brilliant enough. He knows enough, but he isn't shrewd enough. He doesn't seem to know how to 'mix'—he doesn't know how to mingle with people."

"That's one of the fine arts. You mean, do you not, that he isn't resourceful? That he isn't versatile?"

"That's exactly it. Dudley's a thinker, a student, a book-worm; while Robert is an entertainer."

"Most assuredly I'd stay with Mr. Tadmire."

"Papa wants me to 'encourage' Dudley, but I'd rather snub him. I'm simply not going to sacrifice my future to satisfy papa's whimsical notions."

"There's a freshness and a charm about Robert's personality that will keep a person young."

"Oh, I'm for Robert today, tomorrow, and the day after."

"Say! there's a report current that Robert's a bankrupt."

"There isn't a word of truth in it, Helen. It—is—not—true. I'll guess you that Dudley started that."

"I wonder."

They had now arrived at 'The Knickerbocker' offices. Grace alighted nimbly, and Helen waved and drove on. Everybody bowed and smiled at Grace as she entered her father's office. Robert knowingly stepped over to Grace's desk and queried:

"Grace, how about a game of golf, and dinner at The Country Club this P. M.?"

"De-lighted," replied Grace vivaciously.

"Maybe we can get away a little early," suggested Robert.

"Not until the clock strikes five," interposed Mr. Conkling who had pretended to be working diligently; but, who, in truth, was listening diligently, and he continued with a smile, "and then Dudley and I will accompany you and do the course in sixty-six."

"Most people usually wait for an invitation," replied Grace tartly.

"Grace, pardon me, but such is not always necessary," laughed the father.

"Dudley, at least, is presuming a whole lot. He is overstepping the lines of etiquette."

"But I invited him—he knows nothing about it as yet."

"But I don't want him."

"But he's going," answered the father firmly.

The situation was now growing embarrassing for Grace. Her father had rarely been so positive, heretofore. But she was resourceful, and she responded breezily:

"Oh, I forgot. I have an engagement with my dressmaker this evening."

"Then Dudley and Robert and I shall have a game," answered Mr. Conkling shrewdly for he was sure that Grace was playing 'possum.

Robert glanced at Grace with questioning eyes and replied:

"Very well."

What else could a white man say? Clearly he and Grace were checkmated. Naturally Grace was now peevish. She was exasperated with herself and out of sorts with her father. Mr. Conkling suddenly admonished:

"Now, folks, we must get to work; in fact, we'll have to place a ban on tete-a-tetes during office hours; you folks will completely destroy my system, and my discipline will resemble a washrag."

Accordingly, each settled down to work at his respective desk.

The next morning at breakfast, Mr. Conkling smiled at Grace and said:

"Well, Dudley beat Tadmore at golf."

"Accidents will happen," snapped Grace ungraciously.

"Dudley was taken into the lodge the other night, while Robert was blackballed."

"Nothing strange about that. I expect Dudley did the blackballing—he's jealous of Robert, you know."

"No, I didn't know, for Dudley wasn't there. Besides Robert was blackballed fifteen times."

"That proves nothing—the blackballers had friends whom they wished to get in," asserted Grace knowingly.

"Robert's a great entertainer," asserted Mr. Conkling, resorting to strategy and blarney.

"I know it," replied Grace who was highly pleased.

In a moment Mr. Conkling replied:

"But Dudley is going to make the greatest man."

"There's as much difference between those two boys as there is between a goat and a Kentucky thoroughbred, and it's all in Robert's favor."

"Robert has no money. He's a pauper."

"He is not," answered Grace with emphasis.

"Anyway, he borrowed five hundred dollars of me in February, and he has not yet repaid me."

"He explained to me the reason why: the interest-paying time on his securities was changed from semi-annually to annually.

"Without his consent?"

"Yes."

"I could tell you what I think of that story, but I do not wish to disillusion you. Take your father's advice and beware."

"I'd just as soon cultivate the friendship of a 'Wearie Willie' as Dudley's."

"Of course, Grace, it makes no difference to me in one sense; still, in another sense it does; I'm intensely interested in you, and I want to see you well married."

"Papa, I dislike the fact that you dislike Robert."

"If you knew as much about him as I do, you too would—"

"Tell me what you know, papa, or don't talk about it."

"Don't you, mamma, think that Dudley is preferable?"

"With your consent, I'll not take part in this discussion, papa," answered the mother graciously.

"Answer him, mamma—let's settle this matter right now," entreated Grace.

"Yes, answer, Martha, which would be your choice?" queried the husband boldly, having no doubt as to the wife's reply.

"Frankly, folks, I believe that Dudley's the more trustworthy and the more dependable; and he, probably, would make a better husband for Grace; but I do wish that he had a little more style," explained the mother warily.

"That's just it, mamma—that's just it. Who wants to live with a ragman?"

Mr. Conkling was now completely silenced. He had daringly set the trap into which he himself had fallen. He had always talked freely regarding the two young men and their capabilities and the promises of their youth in his wife's presence, and seemingly she had always agreed with him—at least she had not openly disagreed. However the husband realized that he had blundered and lost. He was naturally forced to the conclusion that a woman's silence does not always mean agreement; especially when the lady is a docile, innocent, uncommunicative, unoffending, fragile little creature like his wife. He finally answered:

"Very well, marry the chap; but remember this Grace, you will rue the day."

"Now, papa Conkling, pardon me; but I wouldn't marry Dudley Longdon under any circumstance, even though the finest home on Fifth Avenue went with him. He's not in my class. He's not clever enough. He's too frank, too easily read, too easily caught. What fun would there be in going turtle fishing? I wouldn't go turtle fishing if the prize was a hundred dollars, but I'd go speckled-trout fishing for the pleasure of it. They are cunning, they are game, they are strategists, they are sly and artful and know how to finesse; and when you have caught one, you have something that you respect and prize, for you admire its heroism."

"Anyway, Dudley's big enough to be editor-in-chief of 'The Knickerbocker' some day, for I propose making him such. I think, too, that my judgment of the true worth of a man ought to be worth something."

"Then you have decided that you will not make Robert such?"

"I have," said her father.

"Too big for the place?"

"Yes, he thinks he is; but I'd rather you'd draw your own conclusions."

"I know your implication, and I'd like to know your reasons."

"Simply this: 'The Knickerbocker' would be defunct within twelve months with Mr. Tadmores in charge."

"I think, myself, that Dudley would be more dependable, more even-tempered, more moral; and I also think that he would make Grace a better and more satisfactory husband; but I do wish he was a little breezier and a little more stylish," interposed the mother by way of explanation.

"Robert Tadmores will never rise in 'The Knickerbocker' offices—he can't fill the position creditably that he already has. In fact he's highly unsatisfactory. He could never run a newspaper—he lacks ability, intellectual grasp, stick-to-it-iveness and the bigness of vision which are the necessary characteristics of all great newspaper men. All Robert cares for is a good time."

"Well, papa, Robert doesn't have to work for you," asserted Grace tartly.

"I know he doesn't, Grace. I've often wondered why he stays and handicaps his future when he could earn so much more elsewhere. I'm sure that I don't want to hold him back or keep him down," replied the father shrewdly.

"I'm so sorry that I asked you to give him a job."

"So am I, Grace."

"You're so cranky and so particular."

"Didn't you know that before you interceded for Robert for ten thousand a year?"

Grace did not answer. Breakfast was finished. Father and daughter arose simultaneously, and each started to 'The Knickerbocker' offices in different machines. Mr. Conkling arrived first. He found Anna at Dudley's desk talking to him confidentially. Dudley and Anna had not been friends since the strike; in fact, Dudley had been leaving her severely alone. However, she was now trying to patch matters up. Dudley was now assistant editor. His salary was inviting, he would be a very desirable find. Anna was fully aware of this. A

spider is always sagacious when a fly is near its web. Anna was now smiling infectiously and questioning cunningly as Mr. Conkling entered:

"Dudley, do you ever play croquet?"

"Very rarely."

"Come out this evening and I'll give you a lesson in the science."

"I fear your father might be displeased at my playing in your yard," answered Dudley sarcastically.

"Why so?"

"I'm not a member of the union, you know."

"Oh, that has all blown over, Dudley."

"But you might be mistaken. You know a wound may heal, but a scar always remains. You know that you told me once that your father would be angry if I 'came in.'"

"Now, Dudley, there's no use in stirring up the past."

"I think that I have a perfect right to conclude that you'd rather play croquet with a union man."

"Now, Dudley, no one is going to compel you to come—I've invited you and that's all that I'm going to do."

"I certainly thank you, Anna, for your kindness and your consideration, and I'm sorry that I cannot accept on account of a previous engagement."

"Then don't you dare to break an engagement with your barber or your bootblack for me," replied Anna resentfully.

"Maybe some other day, Anna, we can have a game of croquet," answered Dudley in a conciliatory voice.

"Yes, some day when you can't think of any other place under the sun to go, you come around and we'll have a game," spoke Anna angrily as she stamped her foot violently.

"Now, Anna, don't be a spitfire."

"You're nothing but a German spy and a German sympathizer anyway," spoke Anna bitterly.

"Why, Anna—"

"I mean it. You ought to be drummed out of this country and never allowed to return."

Dudley was vexed, but he answered not. Anna, who was in one of her ugliest moods went directly to her desk and began the work of the day in a discourteous, combative frame of mind. Grace had gone on an errand for her father, who now called Dudley into his office, saying:

"Pardon me, Dudley, Anna's not the girl for you."

"I know it. I haven't liked her since she got so pert about the union."

"Her father, you know is a radical. He's a smarty and a dictator, and his daughter is just like him."

"I believe it."

"She will 'work' you if she can, but in my judgment she'd be a mighty unpleasant hussy to live with."

"There's absolutely no danger of her 'working' me, Mr. Conkling."

"Intellectual men are usually weak in matters of love, and they usually choose a doll or a devil for a wife. I was trying to prevent this in your case."

Dudley smiled and answered:

"I doubt that I come in that class, Mr. Conkling; however, I'm going to try to be fool-proof. You know I had a peep at Anna's imperiousness last fall, and she never again can be a great friend of mine."

Mr. Conkling had been informed thrice by designing people that Dudley was pro-German in his feelings and thoughts if not in his acts, but he did not believe them. However he had been awaiting a good opportunity to question him along this line for ten days, but when he started he wanted plenty of time to finish, and no such time had yet arrived. He now had an opportunity, but he did not have time for he was expecting Grace to return any moment. He explained:

"That's all, Dudley. I'm interested in you. I don't want you to make a mistake. Marriage is really a serious matter. It's for life. Goodby."

"I certainly thank you for your interest in my behalf, Mr. Conkling," answered Dudley as he optimistically went about his work.

XXVI

DUDLEY IS INVITED

It was two days until the Fourth of July. It was evening. Mr. Conkling had just entered the screened-in veranda of his home, where Grace and her mother were sitting, talking—talking styles, talking tailored suits—the ones which they saw that afternoon in one of the show windows—talking about this individual and that individual, talking about the dance of last evening, and the reception for tomorrow evening. Grace looked up innocently as her father entered and queried:

“Papa, what’s annoying you? You’re so restless.”

“Nothing, Grace, in particular.”

“I can always tell when you’re worried.”

“But I should like to have Dudley out to dinner on the Fourth.”

“So that’s it—‘murder will out.’”

“That’s it, but I didn’t know that it was worrying me.”

“Papa, what are we going to do with you?”

“Why?”

“Have you gone mad over Dudley?”

“Now, Grace, listen! When Dudley is giving his time, his vitality, and the very best years of his life to ‘The Knickerbocker,’ should we not show him a little courtesy and consideration?”

“Sure, invite him! He will come with the seat and knees of his trousers bagging, his clothes unpressed, his collar soiled, his shoes unshined, and his whiskers flowing; so invite the lad and we’ll try to give him his first lesson in the art of being civilized.”

“Maybe he’s not so bad, Grace—anyway let’s do our part.”

“Papa, if you have any regard for my feelings and future happiness, you’ll not insist on this.”

“The boy has been quite lonesome since his mother went home, I am sure; although he has never said a word. I can tell by his eyes—they’re so sad.”

“I wish he had accompanied his mother.”

"What would I have done?"

"Failed, I suppose. If he should die or move away, we would immediately be given a ticket for the county farm," answered Grace sarcastically.

"No, I don't think that, but I should miss him very, very much."

"I'd be ashamed to admit it."

"Will it inconvenience you any, Grace, should I invite Dudley for the Fourth? You could go with Mr. Tadmore as soon as dinner is over."

"With that understanding, I give my consent wholly for your sake, papa. What do you say, mamma?" queried the daughter with deference.

"As a matter of courtesy, I think we ought to have him," replied the mother considerately.

"I'd like to have a dinner of at least five courses," explained the father.

"We can make it nine just as well, if you think it would put any additional ginger into Dudley's system," ridiculed the daughter.

"You could have Mr. Tadmore, too, if you wish," suggested the father.

"Heh! Robert wouldn't wipe his feet upon Dudley Longden."

"I imagine that it wouldn't be wise for him to attempt it."

"Robert would consider it a disgrace to be even asked to dine with Dudley."

"He has told you so much?"

"Certainly. Why shouldn't he? Robert's a college graduate, a star athlete, the admiration of his professors, finished his course six months in advance of the prescribed time; but what is Dudley Longden? He's a farmer boy without promise, without education, with no social standing."

"Now, Grace, before you soar too high and get lost among the larks, allow me to inform you that the majority of the big men of this country came from the lowly farm. It is on the farm that they learned to do hard, persistent work which is the forerunner of all positions of merit."

"Papa, you'd have your way, though you knew that you were wrong, so let's have Dudley at dinner on July Fourth, and I'll excuse myself as soon as the last course has been served."

"Very well; that will be perfectly satisfactory to me. You and your mother can go driving with Mr. Tadmire, and I'll remain at home to entertain Dudley."

On the morrow Mr. Conkling went to his office unusually early. He found Dudley hard at work. He greeted him cordially, questioning pointedly:

"Dudley, has anyone arrived yet, beside you?"

"No, Mr. Conkling, and the night boys are gone."

"Dudley, I want you to take dinner with us on July Fourth at four o'clock sharp. It's two hours early, I know, but four o'clock will enable us to have a round of golf before dark."

"I certainly thank you, Mr. Conkling."

"Another thing, Dudley, I have felt under obligations to you ever since you were hurt last fall, and I want to show my appreciation of your interest in my behalf in a substantial way."

"Oh, never mind about that, Mr. Conkling."

"You certainly were true-blue under very trying circumstances, so I have arranged with Messrs. Simonds and Sons for a little haberdashery for you personally."

"No, Mr. Conkling, I have money. I can buy all such things that I need. I don't want you to buy them for me."

"But, Dudley, this is not a matter of charity. I understand that; Messrs. Simonds and Sons understand that; you fully understand that; so why hesitate? I could have bought you a gold watch or a diamond ring, or a gold-mounted grip; but after thinking it over, I decided that clothes would make a more practical and a more useful present."

"I don't want you to do this, Mr. Conkling—I have clothes enough."

"I understand that, Dudley, but these togs are paid for and they are waiting for you. If you don't go after them, Simonds and Sons will be ahead just that much. They're expecting you; and, of course, want you to have them."

"I never was very much for show."

"That's probably where you are 'lame.' You must remember, Dudley, that you have arisen to a position of prominence in my employ. You are on my official staff and rank next to me in prominence and influence, and I should like for you to dress in keeping with your position. If you are well dressed it will lend dignity to 'The Knickerbocker' and give it

an air of prosperity and excellence that can be attained in no other way."

"I dislike to see money wasted on finery. I'm a great fellow to save."

"Dudley, you have inherited at least one of your father's tendencies—be careful that you do not follow him too literally. Thrift is all right—it is a noble quality—but stinginess is a disease, cancerous in its influence upon the nobler qualities of man. Ninety per cent of mankind judge a person by the clothes that he wears, so naturally I wish to give my paper—the pride of my heart—dignity and eclat. So you see, Dudley, that my motive is purely selfish."

"Of course, Mr. Conkling, with that idea in view, I'll accept them."

"Now I've picked out these things for you and I want you to risk my judgment just this one time. I do not wish to be impertinent or prudish or priggish, but for the good of the paper which we both love so much, allow me to insist this time, Dudley, that you risk my choice."

"I acquiesce, Mr. Conkling. I'm sure that you'd ask me to do nothing that would be compromising or improper."

"I certainly would not, Dudley. You go and try the clothes on forthwith, so, if they need alteration, it can be attended to at once. I want you to wear some of your new togs to my dinner on the Fourth."

"Who else will be there?"

"No one but you and the family."

"I didn't know but that you were trying to rush me into society."

"No, Dudley, not that. I know you will pardon me if my request seems a little extraordinary, but remember this, clothes wield a mighty influence in the world of affairs. My staff, the staff of 'The Knickerbocker,' is presumably more efficient than a corpse of college professors, and this is why I'm begging you to be more precise in your dress. Now, Dudley, you will find six suits awaiting you at Messrs. Simonds and Sons, who have been instructed to carefully explain to you when and to what sort of functions it is proper to wear each and every suit. Perhaps you do not know it, but some harsh words have been directed at my editorial staff, not so much on account of the ability of its personnel as the clothes and the dress of its personnel. So I'm very human and a little selfish in this matter.

I wish to show some people that my staff not only has brains, but that it has dignity, style and social excellence."

"I'll help you, Mr. Conkling, although dress is foreign to my ambition."

"Pardon me again, Dudley, if I suggest that you have your hair cut every three weeks, your shoes shined daily, your face shaved every morning, and your clothes pressed weekly."

"I'm your most obedient servant, Mr. Conkling—nobody can beat me trying to follow your wishes."

"I thank you, Dudley, for your co-operation. As I said before, I do not wish to be a crank or a prig."

"Nothing that you have said has impressed me that way, Mr. Conkling."

"Perhaps you'd better go at once, Dudley, and have the clothes fitted."

Dudley made no answer, but started. He was not at all enthusiastic; in fact, he dreaded the ordeal; however, since Mr. Conkling wished it, he did not hesitate. While he was gone to the haberdasher, Mr. Conkling placed a modern book on etiquette on Dudley's desk. He knew that Dudley would take the hint, for he was not only very susceptible, but he had that insatiable yearning to know and to garner. He knew, too, that Dudley would master every detail of the volume before he retired, with a thoroughness that was characteristic of him in everything that he undertook.

That evening Grace and Robert went riding. Robert suddenly and bluntly queried:

"Grace, what are you going to do on the Fourth?"

"Oh, papa thinks that he is in duty bound to have Dudley out to dinner."

"I can't see what your father sees in the lad. He is neither brilliant nor educated. He was small potatoes at home, and he's small potatoes in New York. No one is crazy about him save your father."

"Neither do I understand papa, but he seems to think that Dudley is a second James G. Blaine."

"If he knew him as I know him, he would change his mind."

"Anything dishonorable, Robert?"

"Oh, I mustn't talk about my schoolmate. The thing that nonpluses me is your father's attitude toward me."

"You've probably done something to displease papa—something that mars papa's idea of a perfect day, something that

has interfered with the proper functioning of his system and discipline."

"When are you going to marry me, Grace?"

"Oh, don't mention it, Robert—I'm not nearly ready to settle down. I want to have a good time for at least five more years."

"Why, Grace Conkling! I simply can't wait that long."

"Yes, you can. Let's enjoy life. Let's not allow the thoughts of the dull drudgery of marital life to cast a shadow over our happiness yet a while."

"Grace, let's fix a time for the nuptials and make it soon—I love you so much."

"This is no time to tie ourselves up, Robert. This is the Fourth of July season when the whole American people declared that it was free, when everybody wants to be free."

"That being true, I'll consent to a postponement of the subject until after the Fourth."

"You're always kind, Robert."

"Then you cannot go driving on the Fourth?"

"Not until after dinner is served."

"Then you can go at six?"

"Yes."

"Very well, I shall call for you at six o'clock sharp. Perhaps we can have a game of golf before dark."

"Capital!" exclaimed Grace as she stopped and allowed Robert to alight at The Tavern.

"I certainly thank you, Grace, for your kindness," said Mr. Tadmore politely as Grace nodded and drove on.

XXVII

THE FOURTH OF JULY

The Fourth of July dawned bright and clear. The wee small boy, with bulging eyes and a bunch of Roman candles under his arm, was everywhere. Everybody was seemingly delighted that he lived in the land of the free and the home of the brave, except Grace Conkling who was not at all jubilant. To her the sky was drab. She regarded Dudley as a mollycoddle and a bore. She dreaded the painful monotony and the strained courtesies of the dinner hour. So, she, discontented and unhappy, meandered about the house and yard longing for a good time with no good time in sight. In truth, she would have gone to the office and worked, had this not been a legal holiday, on which occasions the office was always closed. She finally lounged in the hammock where she read short stories in the current magazines—reading indifferently most of the time, but with avidity when the story became unusually thrilling.

Finally it was four o'clock. Dudley rang just as the clock struck the hour. Both Grace and her mother were in negligee attire. Mr. Conkling was comfortably resting in the hammock in the screened-in veranda. However, when he heard Dudley's approaching footsteps, he hastily arose, quickly arranged his toilet, and greeted his employee at the door personally and cordially.

Grace was all the while peeping from behind the draperies of a living-room window. The curiosity of woman is always paramount. Like Banquo's ghost, it will not down. The feminine sex has an insatiable yearning to know, not from hearsay, but as an eye-witness. Grace's alert eyes quickly compassed the situation. She was astonished, annoyed, worried. As soon as she could believe her senses, she hastened upstairs, two steps at a bound; and vigorously nudged her mother, saying, very much out of breath:

"Oh, mamma, he's here."

"Well, what of it?"

"Dudley has arrived, I say."

"Now, don't be foolish, Grace, and don't get snobbish. Understand me, you're going to help papa and me entertain Dudley, and there's to be no foolishness, no knowing smiles, no embarrassments."

"I have no other intention, mamma."

"Now, Grace, another thing: your countenance is a regular barometer of your thoughts, of your likes and your dislikes, and I want you to be careful."

"Now, mamma Conkling, I'm going to be as courteous and as polite as I know how, but you just ought to see—"

"Now, don't make fun—show a little breeding as well as a little charity for the less fortunate. Remember that Dudley Longden hasn't had the opportunities that Robert has had."

"But you ought to see him—you would simply faint, I tell you."

"I don't expect him to be dressed like a courtier."

"But he would certainly surprise the natives. He—"

"That may be, Grace, but it's just for that reason that I'm going out of my way to make him have a pleasant time. We will simply dispense with all etiquette, and have a plain, old-fashioned, country dinner; a dinner something like he has been accustomed to back home."

"Mamma, when you get through, I want to tell you something. He—"

"Just a moment, Grace, and then you may have the floor: I say we'll dispense with all the courses and have a sort of a 'pitch-in' dinner. Should he eat his bouillon with a tablespoon, you eat your bouillon with a tablespoon; should he eat his pie with a teaspoon, you eat your pie with a teaspoon—now, do you understand me, Grace?"

"Why, mamma! you—"

"I mean exactly what I say, Grace. This is one time when I'm going to insist upon certain courtesies for your father's sake. The young man shall not be embarrassed in our home. Your father would never forgive us—he simply would never get over it."

"Now, mamma, who's going to ridicule or embarrass him? If you—"

"I'm merely cautioning you, Grace, lest you do something awful. You are so positive and so decided in your ways, and you have such a well-defined dislike for Dudley, that I want

you to be upon your guard. If he eats with his knife, you eat with your knife; if he ties his napkin about his neck, you follow his example; if he takes his fried chicken up in his fingers, you do the same; if he sops his bread in his gravy, or even in the gravy-boat, you do likewise; if he takes a whole glass of jelly as his legitimate helping, you take a whole glass of jelly; if he leaves his spoon in his coffee, you leave your spoon in your coffee; if he arises from his chair and reaches half-way across the table for something that he wants, you follow suit; if he pours his coffee out in his saucer, if he eats like a whirlwind, if he upsets his glass of water or his coffee upon the floor or the tablecloth, you do likewise."

"Why mamma Conkling, are you crazy?"

"I mean exactly what I say, Grace. This is one time when I'm going to have my way absolutely."

"But, mamma, he's dressed like a prince."

"Dressed like a prince?"

"You ought to see him—he's a regular Chesterfield."

"Are you making fun?"

"He's attired in a Tuxedo, the latest style and color. His shoes shine like peeled onions. He wears the proper shirt, a fresh hair cut and a clean shave."

"Why, Grace, you dumbfound me."

"I've been trying to tell you this for more than ten minutes, but you've persistently blocked my every effort. I'm going to put on my new party dress and use the electric curler. It'll probably make dinner thirty minutes late, but I'd feel like a 'boob' in this attire."

"Maybe I, too, had better put on my best."

"You had; and you'd better, too, order dinner served in courses, if you don't want to be embarrassed."

"Maybe we'd better use our best china."

"I would."

"And the new silver service?"

"I would."

"Then hurry, Grace."

Accordingly the ladies forthwith began speeding up more pretentious preparations. Mr. Conkling finally became nervous and impatient, and excused himself to laboriously climb the stairs to ascertain the trouble. The wife answered apologetically:

"Well, Charles, I'm very sorry, but we looked at the clock

wrong. I grant you that it's rude and inexcusable, but it can't be helped now."

"Had Dudley been five minutes late, you and Grace never would have got through talking."

"I grant you, daddy, that you're right—I take all the blame," interposed Grace sweetly.

"How long will it be," questioned the husband with some impatience.

"Probably ten minutes, daddy," answered the daughter.

"Don't make it longer than that, sweetheart," considerably answered the father whose idea of system and promptness had already received a fatal shock.

Dinner was finally announced. Dudley seemed very much at home; he was very considerate, very pleasant, and unbelievably faultless in his etiquette. Everything that he did was precisely right. He did not overdo, he did not underdo, he was master of the situation always. He had drilled himself until he could pick up the proper spoon in the dark, whether it be orange, soup, coffee, bouillon, or tea; and he could tell an oyster fork from a salad fork, when blindfolded, by its position on the table.

Mr. Conkling was delighted, and chuckled inwardly when he noticed the look of amazement that suffused the countenances of wife and daughter. Dudley, too, was an interesting conversationalist. He had not traveled, but he had read a great deal. More than once Grace caught herself listening breathlessly to the thrilling adventures of some mountain-climber, or to the exciting episodes in the life of some bear-hunter, or to a recital of Livingston's search for the source of the Nile, or to the manners and customs in the Philippines or Cuba, or Argentine. Dudley seemed to have a deliberate, magnetic, vigorous, commanding, engaging way about him that was irresistible. He always left you under the impression that the well of knowledge was not exhausted, that like a swallow, he was only skimming along the surface.

After dinner Grace accompanied Dudley to the screened-in veranda, where she bantered him for a game of golf, in spite of the fact that she already had an engagement with Robert for six o'clock. He replied:

"I'm not an expert, but I guess it's no disgrace to be beaten by a lady in these days of woman's suffrage."

"It's an honor, if you please, Mr. Longden."

"I had not thought of it in that way, but I guess you're right."

"Yes, times have changed; now the female of the species is more aggressive and more daring and more elaborately plumed than the male, all of which is a reversal of the natural order of things."

"I grant it. I accept your challenge, and I'll call a taxi. Which do you choose, swords or pistols?"

"A woman, you know always uses a rolling-pin—but you shall not order a taxi; we'll go in my car and take papa along for umpire."

"Yes, your uncompromising response convinces me that times have changed. However, regarding this umpire; perhaps you have bribed him."

"It is quite true, I grant you, that papa is accustomed to selling out to the 'highest bidder,' but I wasn't aware that it was generally known."

"Oh, yes, it's common talk."

At this juncture Robert drove up in front of the palatial Conkling home, confidently alighted, walked breezily up the front walk, and pompously mounted the veranda steps. As soon as Grace saw him coming, she decided to parry the embarrassment, which was sure to come, by meeting and greeting him on the lowest veranda step, explaining in a gentle voice:

"Robert, things have not worked out as I expected—I'm sorry, but I'll be compelled to cancel my engagement with you for this evening."

"Your father?" questioned Robert anxiously in a whisper.

"No."

"Your mother?"

"No."

"Dudley?"

"No—a combination of circumstances which makes it impossible for me to go this evening. I'll see you tomorrow—goodby."

What could Robert do? What could any white man do? There was certainly no reply to such a high-handed dismissal, except acquiescence and an humble retreat. Truly he was embarrassed, if not chagrined, as he said goodby, turned, retraversed the front walk, and mounted into his machine. Naturally he was disappointed—this was his first reverse.

Grace immediately returned to her company, explaining vivaciously:

"Robert, too, wants a game of golf with me—it's strange that everybody is itching to beat me at golf. I must be either a star or a boob."

"You know it's more fun to beat some people than others."

"That's because?"

"Because they are so vivacious, so eager to beat; so sweet, so cunning, so charming if they are beaten."

"I thank you—I trust your diagnosis is correct. Perhaps we'd better hasten to the links; it will be dark after a while."

"Allow me to call a taxi; anyway I wish to change my togs before I go to the links."

Grace wondered and muttered to herself: "What on earth? Has he got some more togs that he wishes to 'air'?" She answered resourcefully:

"I, too, wish to purchase some golf sticks; so papa and I will let you out at The Tavern as we go, and then we'll pick you up as we come back—it will not take you long?"

"Perhaps ten minutes."

"Then we'll be at the golf links in twenty minutes."

The trio was soon speeding rapidly toward The Tavern, Dudley's present rooming place. As he nimbly alighted, Grace tantalizingly admonished:

"Now, remember, Sir Dudley: we'll be back in ten minutes."

"I'll be ready," responded Dudley cordially.

"You know that a woman has a right to take all the time she pleases in making her toilet, but a man simply has no rights."

"I accept the judgment of 'The Court' as just, and equitable, and final in these days of woman's political and commercial ascendancy."

"Goodby."

In five moments Dudley was waiting at the curb. He was accoutered in Palm Beach knickerbockers, and cap and shoes and hose to match. He certainly looked the part of a full-blown sport. He had only given himself a passing glance when he was in front of the mirror, lest his courage might fail him, lest his better judgment would not stand for the outfit. It required the cudgel of a powerful will to keep him from turning back.

Grace was now in sight, on her return trip. She saw the

gentleman in knickerbockers at the curb, but she was in doubt—in doubt as to his identity. She could not believe that that sporty sport could be Dudley Longden; so she turned to her father and questioned:

"That isn't Mr. Longden at the curb, is it?"

"It certainly is," smiled Mr. Conkling as he replied.

"Can it be possible? What's come over the boy? Why, he has evolved—Darwin must be right," eulogized Grace.

"It seems that what we thought was dogfennel has blossomed, and that the bloom is a revelation—it's an American beauty."

"I admit that I like him better than I thought I would. He's really an interesting fellow."

Mr. Conkling unconsciously chuckled, but he deemed it the portion of wisdom to throw no bouquets, to allow Grace to reach her own conclusions in her own way; so the father made no answer.

Grace dexterously stopped the machine at the curb for Dudley to enter, which he did nimbly and quickly, all the while bragging upon man's punctuality and woman's delinquencies. They were soon at the golf course. Mr. Tadmire was already there. He saw the Conkling machine drive up and lost no time in getting to it. He greeted Grace cordially as she alighted, but he did not seem to see Mr. Conkling or Dudley, inasmuch as he did not speak to either of them. However, Mr. Conkling was not caring anything about Robert Tadmire—he and Dudley hurriedly sought the place for teeing off. Robert addressed Grace boldly:

"Shall we have a game?"

"We shall not have a game—I have a previous engagement with papa and Mr. Longden."

"I beg your pardon; perhaps I might join your party—it's all in the family, you know."

"I would not think of asking papa's or Mr. Longden's consent."

"Oh, call him Dudley—he was your janitor last year," replied Robert sarcastically.

"Anyway he's a delightful fellow."

"You should have seen him on his father's farm in his faded overalls, and his ragged bandana—he was certainly a picture for "Puck," a regular scarecrow."

Grace was sure that this was true, and it was a painful

suggestion to her exalted ideas of a well-groomed gentleman; but Robert was pursuing an undiplomatic course. No lady has ever yet been won in The States by a suitor who ridiculed one of her masculine friends. She answered pointedly:

"Any disgrace about it?"

"Nothing particularly elevating."

"I give Dudley lots of credit for what he has done for himself."

"He's a German sympathizer. He wears a pin as a pledge that he'll upset heaven and hell for the Kaiser."

"I don't believe that, Robert Tadmire."

"Nevertheless, it is true, Grace Conkling."

"Knocking and mud-slinging is never very elevating, and they never get a person anywhere. Dudley has risen in spite of fearful, if not tearful odds, and he-deserves a lot of credit. You've never earned a cent."

"That sounds like one of your father's tunes. Who—"

"Now don't you make fun of papa, or we'll certainly mix. Papa and I are pals."

At this juncture Mr. Conkling holloaed:

"Come on, Grace, if you're 'in' on this game."

"Pardon me, Grace—I didn't know that I was detaining you," interposed Robert mock-courteously.

"Goodby," answered Grace indifferently, and then she muttered to herself; "anyway his head is as shallow as the brook in August—you can see and count all the minnows that swim therein."

Robert did not answer. He wheeled arrogantly upon his heels and walked defiantly away. He was now in an ugly frame of mind. This was the second time that his purposes had been thwarted, and he blamed Dudley wholly for both. He now itched to humiliate him, and if possible he was going to do it sooner or later.

The game of golf progressed. Soon Grace and Dudley were strolling uphill and downhill over the greensward very much more interested in each other than the game of golf. The father, for reasons that are plain, adroitly worked to the other side of the golf course that the little poisoned arrows of Cupid might unmolested play to and fro.

Dudley, as always, was kindly, thoughtful, and courteous. Grace was jubilant. Her spirits were effervescent. She was the victor in the game of golf. Naturally Dudley had so wished

it and had so planned it. He was too sagacious to beat one whose enthusiasm and ambition to beat was as boundless as the sea. He was shrewd enough to know if the female of the species is deadlier than the male, that her bitterness is more easily aroused and less easily placated, and that it is exceedingly hazardous for the male to beat a sweetheart at golf when the magnetic sputterings of love are only in the larvæ state.

The two lovers simpered and giggled infectiously as they neared the clubhouse in quest of lemonade. Grace was supremely happy. An unexpected lover is usually delightful. Dudley was buoyantly optimistic—the rainbow of hope and love had now spanned his horizon. A new wish and a new ideal had come into his life; and, in truth, his stock had mounted to one hundred and two.

XXVIII

A CRISIS

Near ten o'clock on the morning of July fifth, a federal officer entered "The Knickerbocker" offices. He went directly to Mr. Conkling's office and inquired:

"This is Mr. Conkling?"

"Yes sir."

"My name is Adam Boyer," and as he spoke he threw back his coat showing his badge of authority. Then he continued, "Does Dudley Longden work here?"

"He's assistant editor of 'The Knickerbocker,'" responded Mr. Conkling decisively, if not proudly.

"Where can I find the young man?"

"He's out in town attending to a few business matters—why?"

"I have a warrant for his arrest."

"A warrant for his arrest? What has the boy done?"

"Charges have been filed against him accusing him of being a German sympathizer."

"That's a joke, Mr. Boyer. That boy's as loyal as a Scotch Collie."

"Certainly not."

"Yes, but he is. You see, I know."

"Then why this warrant?"

"Someone is playing a joke."

"They certainly don't understand, then, that such a course might cause them a whole lot of trouble."

"Yes, someone has certainly been very unwise."

"I hardly know what to do—I never before had just such a case."

"I'll vouch for the boy's loyalty," spoke Mr. Conkling positively.

"I know that there's absolutely no doubt about your loyalty, Mr. Conkling, and since he's one of your associate editors, it would seem that his loyalty should go unquestioned."

"The boy's all right, I tell you."

"And you say that you'll vouch for his appearance should we want him after I report?"

"Most assuredly I will."

"I thank you. Then should we want Mr. Longden, I'll simply 'phone you?"

"Very good—I'll be responsible for his appearance forthwith."

"Good day."

Grace had a bulging headache this morning, probably due to too much Fourth of July, and she was off duty. Dudley entered "The Knickerbocker" offices just as the federal marshal was passing out, but neither knew the other. Dudley at once approached Mr. Conkling's office window to make his report, but his chief beckoned him inside. Mr. Conkling led the way into his private apartment, where he asked Dudley to be seated. He very much dreaded to tell Dudley about the rumors which had been afloat for sometime, but he finally summoned sufficient courage to proceed:

"A federal officer was just here to see you."

"To see me?"

"Yes, he has a warrant for your arrest."

"For what? On what ground?"

"On the ground that you are a German sympathizer."

"Either Robert or Anna has done this."

"This may prove serious, Dudley. It will at best create a sentiment against you."

"I thought this was a free country."

"It is, but that doesn't mean that everything is free. If everybody were free to do as he pleased, there could be no freedom—it would result in anarchy. Freedom means that you are free to do as you please as long as you do not abridge the freedom of someone else."

"Hasn't every fellow a right to think as he pleases?"

"No, Dudley, he hasn't. Everybody should uphold the flag of the government under which he enjoys 'life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness.'"

"But what if a person loves his Fatherland more?"

"Then he should move to, and live, and rear his family in the Fatherland."

Dudley was temporarily silenced. His eyes were downcast, but in a moment he proudly lifted his head, saying:

"Germany didn't start this infernal war."

"Who did?"

"England, of course."

"Not so. Germany had constructed foundations for her big guns inside of many of the German barns along the Belgian frontier months before war was declared; and when she started her drive for Paris, she simply lifted the barns, placed the big guns on their already-constructed cement foundations and began to shoot before anyone else was really aware that war was on."

"You're misinformed, Mr. Conkling. You don't understand. Somebody has told you wrong. We took several German papers in Waterloo, and they placed an entirely different construction upon the beginning of the war. No, you're wrong—it was England that started the war."

"Your papers blamed England wholly for the war?"

"England and Russia."

"Now, Dudley, that's German propaganda pure and simple. Germany and Germany alone was the cause of the World War. She was seeking war. She was itching for war. She wished to show the world her army. She wished to show the world that she could whip the world."

"Pardon me, Mr. Conkling, but you are mistaken. Germany was forced into the war. She did not want war—the Kaiser said so, and so did Hindenberg."

"Your Kaiser wanted to whip the world before the rest of the nations got ready. He wanted to make all of us bow to him and do as he said."

"I don't believe a word of it. Besides there was no need of the United States getting into this war. If the foolish Americans had kept off the Lusitania, there would have been no war."

"Then everybody else ought to have got off the earth, and got out of Germany's way whenever Germany said so? No one had any right on the high seas save Germany? Germany had a perfect right to anything that she wanted, and no one else had any rights? It was all right for her to bluff and bulldoze the world?"

"Yes, but a bitter war was raging between Germany and England. It was to be a fight to a finish. It was a matter of life and death. Why did the silly Americans try to complicate the tangle? England was jealous and calculating and selfish, and naturally she tried to draw The States into the

maelstrom of war—that was her scheme. Besides the United States furnished England all the ammunition and guns that she wanted—was that right? Was that humane and peace-producing?”

“Who furnished Spain with her munitions during the Spanish-American war?”

“I couldn’t say.”

“It was Germany.”

“Who told you?”

“It’s a matter of history, and, so far as I know, has never been denied by Germany herself.”

“That’s the first time that I ever heard of that.”

“Dudley Longden, Prussia is a barbarous, war-loving country. She is responsible for the greatest and most fiendish war in history, and for what suffering and sorrow and tears, God only knows.”

“Then England is an angel?”

“She was in this instance. Why, England was not expecting war; in fact, it was two years before England was ready for war, during which time more than a half-million of her sons were slaughtered, helplessly slaughtered by fiendish Germany. There was no crime too diabolical, no act too nefarious or too heinous for Germany to undertake and carry to completion. They have reminded me of ferocious beasts of the jungles.”

“I thought England tried to enslave the colonies and tried to impress the American seamen.”

“She did.”

“Then you are a loyal American when you take England’s part?”

“I certainly am as between England and Germany. Besides, even though a man be sent to the penitentiary for murder, do you deny him the right of repentance?”

“I never did like to see a lot of big chaps impose upon a little chap—German’s a little country.”

“Dudley, really are you a German sympathizer?”

“I guess I am, Mr. Conkling.”

“This is the first unholy mixup that we’ve ever gotten into, Dudley; but I can’t see how I’m going to endure an unpatriotic American.”

“I’m sorry, Mr. Conkling; I’m honest in my convictions.”

Mr. Conkling hung his head as he responded:

"I never would have thought it, Dudley—what you now have and all that you hope to be, you owe to that flag there. It makes this country a safe place to live in; it makes this country a safe place to die in."

"But couldn't this country be wrong?"

"Not this time, Dudley."

"I'll do anything for you, Mr. Conkling, but give up my Germany."

"What are you going to do when the federal marshal calls for you?"

"Do you think that he'll call?"

"I think he will."

Dudley hesitated. He was in a deep study. In a moment or so he answered:

"I suppose that I'll have to go with him—what else could I do?"

"You could repent. You could become a patriotic American."

"My wire badge has the initials: 'G. F.' meaning, 'Germany First.' I have made an oath before highest heaven that I'll protect The Fatherland against all the nations of earth; so I could not now forego my pledge, no difference what the cost."

"You'd sacrifice everything?"

"I shall be true to The Fatherland; I'll not forget my vow to The Fatherland whatever betides."

"You're for Germany, right or wrong?"

"Germany's never wrong."

"Then I've been harboring and aiding an enemy of my country and my flag?"

"I don't know, but this I do know: I'm for Germany First."

"Germany's our enemy."

"Then I suppose I'm your enemy, Mr. Conkling."

The editor sighed. Big tears came into his eyes. His lips quivered. All his hopes had now been dashed down. Dudley had been the pride of his heart. His face was pallid. His soul was stirred by a mighty emotion. Pain was in every line of his countenance as he spoke almost inaudibly:

"You may go—go about your work."

As he said this he made an emphatic gesture that could mean nothing less than:

"Away with him! Away with him!"

Probably the greatest tragedy in human experience is the

sudden realization of a misplaced confidence, whether it be in a husband, or a wife, or a friend. That was what made Gethsemane so bitter and so trying.

XXIX

AN UNHONORED CHECK

A warm friendship existed between Grace and Dudley; but Mr. Conkling was not jubilant. His sensibilities were stunned. He shut himself up in his office and his room, and refused to see anyone save on business of extreme importance. He was brooding over a misplaced confidence. He did not go driving—he was morose and unhappy. He had little to say, even to his family. The magnetic smile had left his countenance, and a look of sadness lingered about his eyes. In truth, Dudley's name did not stir the editor's soul with enthusiasm. Each tried to avoid the other.

Grace was really in love with Dudley. He was not only a well-groomed young man, he was a well-educated young man. Robert was too shallow, too superficial. Too often she had taken soundings and found nothing but sand.

Robert, of course, could not understand. He was grief-stricken because of Grace's coolness and change of heart. He considered himself a much more desirable prize than Dudley, and naturally he was puzzled because of Grace's indifference. Was he not a graduate of Belmont? Had he not been a star of the first magnitude in athletics? Socially did he not belong to the select inner circle? True, Grace spoke to him when she met him, but the old-time cordiality was gone. She was not as frank, or as cordial, or as familiar, or as approachable as she had been heretofore.

He finally concluded that it must be his clothes. His wardrobe was not as complete as formerly. He was not as near up to date as when he was at Belmont. He was now not able to keep pace with the styles. He was no longer a ruling prince of fashion; whereas Dudley was strictly up to date. Something must be done, but what could he do without money? He already had a champagne appetite and a home-brew income—what would he have should he double his expenditure for clothes?

He cogitated as follows:

"I must keep pace no difference what the cost. I must not let Grace Conkling get away. Dudley now has a 'breezy' wardrobe, therefore I must have a 'breezy' wardrobe. Then perhaps I can win Grace back again. The only reason that she is now clinging to him instead of me is undeniably because of the clothes he wears; so my course is plain."

Accordingly Robert went to Messrs. Simonds and Sons, the most stylish haberdashers in New York. He bought prodigally—bought the best and the most expensive, the latest and the most striking, the flashiest and the most daring. When all his purchases had been made, he gave the haberdashers a check for five hundred twenty-five dollars and quitted the place with a sigh of relief, if not buoyant satisfaction. His wardrobe had now been rejuvenated. It was complete. Self-confidence had been restored.

In two or three days Dudley received a telephone communication from Messrs. Simonds and Sons stating that the bank had refused to honor his check. This was like bumping into a stone wall unawares on a dark night. He naturally could not understand. He asked Mr. Conkling to excuse him a few moments. All the way to Simonds and Sons he wondered. He was sure that something was wrong, but he could not understand just what. He went directly to the office of the haberdashers and asked to see the unhonored check. He at once proclaimed it a forgery. It was true that they had a check for five hundred and twenty-five dollars payable to Simonds and Sons duly dated and duly signed by Dudley Longden; however he politely disowned it and indifferently left the store. That same afternoon a representative of the firm called upon Dudley, who in the course of the conversation exclaimed:

"You can go to my room and if you find any of the merchandise enumerated on this bill of sale, I'll gladly pay you—I have money and I can and will pay for everything that I buy."

"You bought several suits of clothes of us a day or so before the Fourth of July."

"I did not buy them—Mr. Conkling bought them and paid for them."

"He certainly did not. He probably intended that you should pay for them."

"Do you think that I would have signed a check for five-twenty-five, and then forgotten about it?"

"Certainly something of that sort has happened. You got the clothes and here's your check."

"Mr. Conkling doesn't do things that way, and I don't do things that way."

"Isn't Dudley Longden your name?"

"It is, but don't you suppose that I know my signature?"

"If you didn't sign this check, who did?"

"How do I know? That's your business, and not mine."

"It looks as though I was going to be compelled to turn this over to an officer."

"I have no objection."

"What would your defense be?"

"That I did not draw the check; that I did not get value received; that I personally have never bought anything in your store."

"Have you any idea as to who signed that check?"

"Yes, but I might be mistaken."

"You'll tell me your suspicions?"

"Why should I? I might be wrong."

"Isn't Robert Tadmire a friend of yours?"

"He formerly was, but not now."

"Has he bought any new clothes lately?"

"You can tell by asking him."

"He works here?"

"He does."

"Where will I find him?"

"Ask someone else—I'd rather take no part in the affair."

The representative of Messrs. Simonds and Sons stepped briskly away, approaching a young lady near by—it was Anna—he asked her where he might find Mr. Tadmire. She directed him. He walked boldly up to Robert's desk and accosted him:

"Your name is Tadmire?"

"It is."

"You bought several suits of clothes of Messrs. Simonds and Sons?"

"I did, and I paid for them."

"How?"

"With the cash, of course."

"How much did the clothes amount to?"

"I don't remember," replied Robert, who was hedging.

"Five hundred and twenty-five dollars."

"I don't remember, I tell you."

"That was the amount all right, and you gave a check, too."

"You're a fool."

"That remains to be seen."

"I'll make your hungry carcass look like a sieve, if you dare to connect my name with such an unsavory affair. My reputation is about all that I possess, and for it I'll fight to the bitter end."

"We'll see—I'll call an officer."

"Don't you dare! You idiot!"

This reply somehow had the ring of sincerity and challenge in it, and it quite disarmed the mercantile representative, giving him a vacillating, undecided, irresolute bearing. But when he noticed that several of the clerks were watching him, he was embarrassed, and to relieve the embarrassment, he answered:

"Ha, ha! So you mean to say that you'll build a fire under me?"

"I certainly will. Besides you're bothering me during office hours which Mr. Conkling strictly forbids."

"You make this forgery good right now, and I'll quit bothering you."

"Are you crazy?"

"No, but I'm very much on the trail of a crook."

"Do you want me to mop the floor with you?"

"Take off Messrs. Simonds and Sons' suit of clothes first."

"I paid for it."

"With a worthless check."

"I told you I paid the cash."

"We have no cash sale for anything like this amount, but we have a check sale for exactly this amount. Besides this suit that you have on, is the only one of the kind that we ever had."

"That proves nothing."

"It doesn't? The sales slip for this five hundred and twenty-five dollars has upon it this identical suit of clothes, and this sales slip shows that it was a 'check' sale."

"As soon as I am at liberty, I'll call at your office and either prove to you that you are wrong, or I'll take up the check."

"When, sir, will you be at liberty?"

"Five o'clock."

"I'll agree to that, but if you fail, an officer will be after you, buddie."

Robert made no answer, but as soon as the representative had gone, Robert went over to Dudley's desk and questioned in a very low voice:

"What are you trying to do to me?"

"Nothing that I know of—why?"

"Didn't you send that fellow to me?"

"I did not."

"What was he doing so long at your desk?"

"Trying to make me take up a forged check."

"Why? Did you have an overdraft?"

"Had the bank cashed this forgery, I would have had an overdraft."

"Then the bank refused to cash it?"

"It certainly did—why shouldn't it? I didn't have that much money there."

"And then you sighted him to me?"

"No sir. He asked about you when I disclaimed the check, and I told him that he'd have to get his information of someone else."

"Now, I'll confess to you that I signed that check. I needed the clothes and I was broke. I intended to tell you about it when I repaid you in two or three weeks."

"That's certainly mighty poor business, Robert, I must say."

"It makes absolutely no difference how poor the business may be, you take up that check, or I'll expose your past."

"Expose my past?"

"Yes, when you used to steal things."

"Steal things?"

"Books, and all such things."

"You just expose and be danged. You can't bluff or scare me. I've already told Mr. Conkling that I took some books to read, and I told him why and when I did it; and I've paid Mr. McDuffy twice as much as he asked for the use of the books. So, naturally, my conscience is clear, and you can do your dirtiest."

"That doesn't change the fact that you were a thief."

"Do you really think that you can bluff me? If you do, proceed. You already owe me five hundred dollars, why don't you pay it?"

"You're doubting my integrity?"

"I'm reciting facts."

"You'll not take that check up for the sake of our boyhood?"

"No sir."

"You'd see me go to jail?"

"It wouldn't be my fault."

"It would be, if you'd allow me to go, wouldn't it?"

"I can't see why I should interfere—a millionaire couldn't keep you going."

"I never would have thought that you'd be so coldly indifferent, Dudley."

"Robert, what have you ever done for me?"

"All that you have ever asked."

"True, I've asked no favors of you, but it's also true that you've shown me none."

"Dudley, I would have done anything for you that you asked."

"Robert, I don't believe that. In fact, I'm convinced that you antagonized me, and ridiculed me, and berated me, and belittled me every time that you've had an opportunity."

"So you want to see me humiliated?"

"Did I say that?"

"Your words imply as much."

"Wherein?"

"At least your actions do, in that you refuse to help me by making good that check."

"It is true that I refuse to loan you any more money."

"Do you call your attitude friendly?"

"At least, it's a necessary attitude, if I do not wish to be a bankrupt."

"Dudley, you have revealed an ignoble trait this afternoon. I want nothing more to do with you. I supposed that membership in our little society at home and that pin there, that you wear, would always command the assistance of any member of the society when I was in trouble."

"What do you mean, Judas? Don't you know that I know that you are a traitor? That you have used this very pin and my membership in our little society against me? Why, you're a snake and a toad. Seemingly, you've followed me, like a yellowjacket, and tried to do me harm."

Robert was now on the defensive. He was temporarily silenced. He knew not just what Dudley knew; but he did

know that all that Dudley had charged him with was true. However, as is usually the case, Robert continued to upbraid Dudley, that he might lead him away from the real issue by saying:

"No, in the future, you need not speak to me; do not recognize me on the street; do not refer to me as your friend for it is not true; do not mention me as a comrade of your boyhood."

Robert was trying to lash himself into a fury. He was trying to get angry and incensed. He showed much feeling. His flashing eyes resembled dagger points, and he indignantly turned and walked away. He knew that the day of his humiliation was near, and he concluded that bluff, and bunk, and boldness, and dissimulation were his only hope.

The next morning Robert beckoned Grace to one side. She was not jubilant. She approached him with wondering eyes. Her love for him had shriveled like a grain of wheat that has been prematurely garnered. She had time and again turned her unerring telescopes upon the firmament of his intelligence and found nothing there. Clothes may be your passport into select society; but it takes more than these to win a wide-awake American girl's heart—it requires intelligence, versatility, resourcefulness, character and a disposition to make good. Robert spoke as follows:

"Grace, Dudley is trying to humiliate me."

"How's that?"

"Accidentally, I don't know how, I did it accidentally I say, I signed his name to a check."

"What check?"

"A check that I gave Messrs. Simonds and Sons."

"How in the world did you happen to do that, Robert?"

"I really don't know, unless I was subconsciously thinking of Dudley at the time."

"What has he done, and what is he trying to do to you?"

"He's trying to humiliate me, I say."

"How?"

"By calling an officer."

"I would not have thought that of Dudley."

"Anyway he has done it."

"I'll speak to him about it."

"No, don't do it, Grace—don't get confidential with him; he's no friend of yours: he said that he had another girl that

he liked a whole lot better than you, but that he was compelled to go with you to please Mr. Conkling, that it was simply a proposition of holding his job and go with you, or lose his job if he did not go with you."

"The hyena! Why, it's not so; it's not—"

"What! you're not disputing my word are you?"

"No, no! I was merely saying that what Dudley said about holding his job was not so."

"Pardon me. I misunderstood you. Every word of what I've told you is true. But what shall I do to extricate myself from this dilemma?"

"Why don't you take up the check?"

"I haven't the money. I haven't yet realized upon my securities."

"But you said that you signed Dudley's name through mistake."

"I did."

"But you now say that you have no money—what I want to know is: what would you have done, or rather what would have happened had you signed your own name instead of Dudley's?"

"It—it may—it may be—"

"I can't see but that the result would have been the same."

"Still that doesn't change Dudley's motives."

"No, that's true—I think papa will let you have the money."

"Don't ask him, Grace—I already owe your father five hundred dollars, and I wouldn't think of asking him for another loan."

"What in the world do you do with your money, Robert? You must be a poor financier."

"Grace, I'm just too big-hearted: I give too much money to the poor, and the sick, and the unfortunate. I'll just have to quit it."

Sympathy was now working like yeast in Grace's heart. If you can thoroughly stir a young lady's sympathies, your case is ninety per cent won. Robert pretended to be suffering intense anguish, and he moaned a little now and then, and he forced a few tears to flow. Grace's feelings were soon thoroughly stirred, and she considerately replied:

"I'd loan you the money, Robert, but I myself received a notice of a small overdraft yesterday morning."

"Beastly luck! Fate, heaven and hell are arrayed against me," exclaimed Robert in an exasperated voice.

"Why not let the case go to trial—they couldn't prove that you intentionally signed Dudley's name."

"But the humiliation! Oh, Grace! How can I ever stand it? Oh, my! The awful humiliation of it!"

Robert pretended to be wiping the tears away all through this tragical outburst of seemingly intense suffering. Grace was deeply moved and replied:

"I'll see you through, Robert."

"You're always kind, Grace—always so kind."

"I never allow a friend of mine to be imposed upon."

"Dudley is, of late, so snobbish, so arrogant, and so insolent. I have always been for him until now. I've never said anything about his thievery and his many other shortcomings."

"Thievery?"

"Yes, he broke into a store in Waterloo and pilfered continually during a period of two years. I've never said anything to anybody about it, but I now feel that I'm under no obligations to keep quiet."

"The idea! Who would have thought it?"

"It's the gospel truth, Grace."

"Was he put in jail?"

"No, he wasn't. The father came to the boy's rescue and fixed matters up somehow, after which he drove Dudley from home."

"I never would have thought that of Dudley Longden."

Grace's anger waxed as Robert persisted in sowing the seeds of doubt and distrust. Soon she was wavering in her choice between these two young men, but finally her sympathy for the defunct spendthrift, Robert's misrepresentations, and Dudley's pro-German proclivities caused her to decide against young Longden. It was thus that Grace's and Dudley's friendship now suffered a decisive slump. When Dudley asked her that evening to go motoring, she pleaded a previous engagement, and there was nothing but harshness and coldness and unkindness in her voice when she answered. Dudley, being both super-sensitive and independent, decided to deliberately await developments, making no effort to see or speak to Grace during the balance of that and the following day.

The next afternoon Robert was arrested. He pleaded "not guilty," and asked for a jury trial. He also requested of his attorney that he secure a feminine jury if possible. He was successful. He also asked for an immediate trial. It was granted. The attorneys paced to and fro with a stately, dignified tread. The judge rocked serenely back and forth in his big armchair. The jury was quickly passed and impaneled. Naturally Robert was there. He walked about knowingly and presumptuously. He was dressed in the pink of fashion. Suddenly there was much chatter in the jury box. One lady juror whispered to her neighbor:

"I hope that well-dressed young man there isn't the prisoner."

"Yes, he is."

"Isn't he swell?"

"I'm convinced that he isn't guilty," responded the second lady enthusiastically.

"It's a case of spite-work, I tell you," replied the first dispenser of justice.

"I do believe that you're right—why, that fellow could do no wrong."

"Just look at those clothes: he's certainly a high-up."

"Do you know who's trying to give him the 'worst of it'?"

"A young man by the name of Longden, I believe."

"It's certainly all wrong for anybody to try to besmirch a noble young man like this. Why, it's sinister, wicked, devilish."

"I'm going to vote for acquittal."

"I shall too, if I don't change my mind."

"You'll make a mistake if you don't help acquit him. Why, that boy's faultless—he's as innocent as a rosebud. He couldn't do wrong if he wanted to."

"I'd really pronounce him the perfect man."

"Well, I'm ready to vote—what are they fooling about?"

"Oh, they're fencing—these men are so worrisome."

"Who's that young lady sitting at the side of the prisoner?"

"That's Miss Conkling—she's seeing him through."

"I thought she was unduly interested—are they sweet-hearts?"

"It's generally presumed that they are engaged, but nobody knows for sure."

"Then it's certainly a 'frame-up' or Miss Conkling would not so openly be for him."

"Too, you know, Mr. Tadmores has a high position with Miss Conkling's father in 'The Knickerbocker' offices."

"No, I didn't know that."

At this juncture the trial proceeded, the witnesses were examined, the lawyers shrieked, the judge instructed, the jury deliberated. In five minutes Robert was acquitted on the ground that the forgery was a mistake—so the jury decided. The fact that Robert swore that he signed Dudley Longden's name to the check unintentionally, somehow appealed to the sense of equity and justice of this feminine jury. Accordingly Messrs. Simonds and Sons were losers, and Robert Tadmores was exonerated. Thus Robert, in his first mix-up with the law, was triumphant. It was true that he was born under a lucky star, but presumably every star eventually sets.

XXX

DUDLEY'S DIAGNOSIS

Dudley had been reading—reading until two o'clock in the morning during three consecutive nights. As usual he was determined to know the truth—the truth about the World War, the truth as to who was responsible for it and who would eventually be held accountable for it.

That it was a dreadful, uncanny affair, he was sure. It was so dreadful and so uncanny that it haunted and depressed him day and night during the three days that he carried on his intensive investigation. It had cost sorrow immeasurable and treasure untold; but it was the forlorn, pitiable cries of the multitudes of hungry, helpless, fatherless children that made Dudley's heart bleed unremittingly.

He had read everything that he could find that at all related to or had a bearing upon this unprecedented upheaval. He had not only studied the direct and palpable causes of the war, but the more remote and indirect ones—the ones which ramified and were deeply rooted in the jealousies of nations thirty, forty, and fifty years before the war started. No one could deny that Dudley was honest and conscientious even though he was wrong. His words always reflected his convictions. He did not resort to subterfuges; he did not compromise. He read both the English and the German accounts of the beginning of the war, and then he tried to decide who was right and who was wrong. He tried to approach the matter with a free, unbiased judgment. He was seeking the truth, and it was the truth that he proposed to know even though "The Fatherland" was unquestionably proven the arch criminal of the ages, even though it was Germany that was chargeable with all the unhallowed suffering that was thrust upon the world one day in August, nineteen fourteen.

During this period of intensive research, Dudley and Mr. Conkling scrupulously avoided each other. Each decided that, at least for the present, it was not wise that he meet or see

the other. Each hoped that the break, which seemed inevitable, might be avoided, but each was likewise positive that the other was wrong. Thus each remained steadfast, resolutely praying that the other might see the truth of the whole affair before the break came.

It was now near a week after Dudley and Mr. Conkling had their altercation that Dudley diffidently entered Mr. Conkling's office. He had not shaved or changed his linen during these days of intensive and extensive research. He looked jaded and enervated, but his voice was musical and his words were kindly, when he addressed Grace and Mr. Conkling as he entered:

"Good morning, folks."

Grace responded indifferently; Mr. Conkling answered more cordially:

"A good morning to you, Dudley."

"Mr. Conkling, may I speak to you privately?"

"Certainly," replied the editor eagerly, half-rising from his chair.

"Allow me to retire," interposed Grace sarcastically.

"That is quite unnecessary, Miss Grace. I have a personal matter which I wish to take up with your father, if you will be so kind as to pardon us," explained Dudley graciously.

"Oh, certainly," answered Grace crabbedly.

The two gentlemen entered Mr. Conkling's private office. Each was very nervous. The situation was awkward, if not embarrassing. Neither had forgotten what was said one week since. Naturally each was under extreme tension. Mr. Conkling was somewhat frustrated, but he spoke cordially while they were being seated:

"Dudley, you look so haggard—are you ill?"

"No, I think not; however I've been working intensely trying to decide who was responsible for the World War."

"May I ask what your findings were?" questioned Mr. Conkling eagerly.

"Mr. Conkling, I do not believe that you should blame me too severely for my prejudices."

"Possibly not," answered Mr. Conkling coldly for he was sure that Dudley was not going to retract.

"Mr. Conkling, my prejudices could not have been otherwise than what they were. My parents are German. I lived for eighteen years in a German community, where to be un-

patriotic to The Fatherland was considered a sin next to blasphemy. Neither should our German community be blamed too severely—it was cut off from the rest of the world and knew less about the United States than it did about The Fatherland. Mr. Conkling, I did not maliciously intend to be unpatriotic, nor did any of my little community. We read German newspapers that were severely censored by the Kaiser's group. We got a lopsided and incorrect view of the situation. Germany, as you probably know, was exceedingly cunning in her propaganda, and naturally we wanted to believe, and we did believe that Germany was right. Personally I loved the Stars and Stripes before the war—I love the flag of any country when I'm convinced that it has high and holy motives—thus far I had found the motives of the United States very lofty in every war in which she has taken part. However, in this World War I was sure that Germany was right, and I thought it was my undisputed right, nay, my duty, to say so; and that is why I was so bold when I last talked with you."

"That all sounds perfectly natural, and in one sense, I presume you were justified in your point of view."

"Again, in our little community a feeling of sharp antipathy toward The States and their flag crept into the minds and hearts of our people. This is how it happened: a stranger came into our midst, gradually worked his way into the confidence of our community, accepted the hospitality of our homes, pretended to be our friend, and then straightway left us and had the head of each family of our sect arrested and prosecuted to the limit of the law for making grape wine for its own use. The stranger was a prohibition officer."

"Any red-blooded individual would resent such a stealthy betrayal of his confidence."

"I think so."

"I now understand, Dudley, the reason for your prejudice in behalf of Germany, but what conclusion did you come to as regards who was responsible for the war?"

"Primarily, Germany. Undeniably Germany wanted to try out and show off her army. She had a great machine—she wanted to see what it would and could do. Theodore Roosevelt eulogistically told the Kaiser that he had the flower of the earth in his army, and the Kaiser believed him."

"It is barely possible that the Prussian bunch had a touch

of nightmare, and became unnecessarily alarmed in the sense that children are afraid of ghosts—alarmed lest the English-French-Russian alliance might unexpectedly swoop down upon them like a wolf from the fold and totally destroy them. But subsequent history has proved that it was, in fact, only a nightmare; for not one of the three nations was really prepared for war, all of which Germany ought to have known before she touched off the powder can. Really, it was two long, bitter, humiliating years before England was ready; Germany all but took Paris before France was ready; Russia never did get exactly ready; while the indisputable fact confronts us that Germany was the only nation that was really ready for war; therefore, the conclusion is forced upon us that Germany started it, and she will be and ought to be held accountable for it.”

“What caused Germany to imagine that sooner or later England and France would attack her?”

“As I said, it was probably a little stagefright without cause, probably due to over-suspiciousness, probably due to the aggressiveness and selfishness of England, probably due to the bitterness which had rankled in the heart of France since 1870, probably due to the alliance called The Entente which was no secret. England, too, you know, has always been jealous of her keenest competitor for world trade, and she has always striven to humble, if not destroy, her most powerful antagonist.”

“Do you know that to be true?”

“I believe the evidence is incontrovertible, Mr. Conkling.”

“But wasn’t Germany domineering and insolent in her attitude toward the Parisians?”

“She may have been, but it is also true that many, many Germans were openly insulted and bitterly assaulted on the streets of Paris just previous to the World War. I honestly believe that both nations were to blame for their insolent ways.”

“But who started the war?”

“Germany. She was wholly to blame with possibly a few mitigating circumstances.”

“Isn’t that a terrible crime to be charged against any people?”

“I grant it.”

“A river of widow’s tears, myriads of broken homes, count-

less vacant chairs, millions of cripples, an appalling and ruthless loss of human life—all these and more are the resultants of war; all these stagger the human conscience and make civilization a mockery.”

“It is Germany’s unbelievable preparations that convict her.”

“Dudley, I’m so glad that you have arrived at this conclusion. Your previous convictions worried me exceedingly.”

“They worried me, too, Mr. Conkling; but, based upon the evidence that I then had, I could arrive at no other conclusion. I know you will pardon my former prejudices. I am here to apologize. I certainly thank you for your indulgence, but I have bothered you quite enough, so I will go about my work. Goodby.”

“Goodby, Dudley, I want you to know that I appreciate your courage and your frankness and your honesty.”

Dudley quietly quitted the room, gave Grace only a passing glance as he hurried out, and soon he was again pounding his typewriter. He was glad—glad that his ordeal was over, glad that he had found the truth, glad that his pleasant relations with Mr. Conkling were again restored.

XXXI

STRATEGY

The estrangement between Grace and Robert had now been thoroughly patched up. Dudley was in the "offing"—the kaleidoscope had turned revealing to Dudley a sky that was drab and a landscape that was dull and somber. He was disappointed, but not bitter; independent, but not arrogant.

Mr. Conkling again regarded Dudley with favor, and he viewed the strained relations between Grace and Mr. Longden with regret. He considered and pondered the situation, during his leisure moments, long and much; but he made a confidant of no one. His thoughts and plans were as inscrutable as those of the sphinx.

It was near one week later that Mr. Conkling arrived at his office one hour early. It was not an accident. It had been deliberately planned. He wished an uninterrupted conference with Dudley who, as usual, was working like a whirlwind when the editor arrived. The latter accosted him courteously:

"Dudley, do you never stop—not even for a lunch?"

"Oh, yes, Mr. Conkling—a fellow has got to put a little coal in the engine at regular intervals," rejoined Dudley with a smile.

"Anyway, you were pounding that typewriter when I quit my office last evening, and you're still pounding it when I arrive this morning."

Dudley smiled. Mr. Conkling continued:

"Now, Dudley, I know that you will pardon my seeming boldness in saying or suggesting what I'm going to suggest to you."

Dudley's eyes dilated. They beamed with expectation as the editor continued:

"I realize that my subject is a delicate one, but I'm sure that you'll not misinterpret my motive. I wish to assure you in advance that I have no ulterior purposes, neither do I wish to handicap you one jot or one tittle."

"I'll not ascribe, Mr. Conkling, any bad motive to anything that you do or say."

"Dudley, it is relative to Grace and you." Dudley colored perceptibly. The editor continued: "Frankly, I do not want her to be a friend of Mr. Tadmores. I do not approve of his morals or his spendthrift ways; in truth, I do not regard him as worthy of her friendship; much less do I regard him as worthy of being my son-in-law, however presumptuous that may sound."

"I agree with you, Mr. Conkling."

"Now, I do not wish to make you the cat's paw, I do not wish to involve you in a situation that is embarrassing to say the least, but I should like to have your assistance."

"You certainly are entitled to any help that I'm able to render."

"Allow me to repeat, Dudley, before I proceed: I'm not offering my daughter in marriage; I'm not trying to hamper your free and untrammelled choice of any young lady with whom you may wish to affiliate; I do not wish to bind or hinder your present or your future, now or hereafter; but I do wish to rescue Grace from the machinations and flattery and misrepresentations of Robert Tadmores, whom I, rightfully I think, denominate "Belshazzar." I know more about "Belshazzar" than you may imagine, and I'm sorry to say that what I know is not at all complimentary."

"What do you want me to do, Mr. Conkling?"

"Dudley, if my plans are at all fruitful, we'll be compelled to resort to diplomacy, and perhaps strategy."

"I may need some schooling along this line, Mr. Conkling."

"Yes, you will, Dudley. You're naturally a little lame in this sphere of human activity; nevertheless the practice of it is absolutely necessary to your highest success. You're too frank, you're not secretive enough, you're motives are too readable. There are times when you should seem more indifferent, when you should be more calculating, more mercenary, more selfish—these are the salt and the pepper that season the sausage, and if you do not have them you become a prey to designing people. You ought to know how to set a trap and bait it—how to bait it often with chocolates and carnations and flattery and self-esteem."

"You are absolutely right, Mr. Conkling: the reason that I always got the flouncings at home, while my brother always

escaped, was that very thing—I was always too frank, too truthful, too outspoken, while my brother was more secretive, and more evasive, and never told all that he knew.”

“Then your duty is plain; namely, cultivate secretiveness assiduously. Your future welfare depends upon it, and your success in life demands it—but pardon me if I change the subject and ask you if you know Helen Hunt.”

“Yes, I know her fairly well.”

“She lives immediately across the street from us, you know.”

“I know.”

“You like her?”

“She seems to be a very delightful girl.”

“I want you to call upon her frequently. Now don’t ask me why. I have a reason which you will understand upon reflection.”

“Obedience is the order of the day,” smiled Dudley.

“I have arranged for an auto for you. It’s yours to use, however and whenever you see fit.”

“You’re always kind, Mr. Conkling.”

“Above all things, Dudley, cultivate Miss Hunt’s acquaintance and cultivate it assiduously.”

“But what if she is cold and indifferent and frowns when I call?”

“Take this tip from a connoisseur who courted young ladies for fifteen years, and thinks that he fully knows the game: never lose your nerve; never get excited and quit before the suit is won or lost; never stop making hay when the sun quits shining; and—I’ll tell you more—Helen Hunt will not frown upon you. I know; I haven’t lived a half a century for naught in this old world.”

“I’d hate to cruise into a submerged sandbar or an unchartered mountain peak.”

“No danger, Dudley—don’t lose your nerve. Bolster up your courage; but be careful of one thing; don’t allow Helen to become infatuated.”

“Infatuated?”

“Yes, you can prevent this by giving her to understand from the start that you have other feminine friends; that you are not concentrating, but scattering your affections; that your ideal has not yet come out of the clouds.”

“I’m a failure as an actor.”

“You’ll never learn younger. You take Helen motoring

frequently, and blow your horn vigorously in front of Helen's home every time that you have the slightest reason for so doing."

"I can do that all right."

"Now, should Grace in the course of events invite you to a dinner party, you politely decline, pleading a previous engagement. However, when you meet her, address her cordially and courteously, but at the same time assume an attitude of dignity, if not modest independence. Observe the laws of etiquette most scrupulously, for the ladies rave over and seem to relish and really enjoy this 'stuff' that I call whitewash, or palaver. However, you must be upon your guard: don't allow yourself to be trapped. The women are passing shrewd, and they dissect and analyze and read the very secrets of your soul when you know it not. They seem to know intuitively. It must be an instinct—an instinct very much like that that impels the birds to go to the southland in the autumn and to the northland in the spring. This is what I'm trying to tell you in brief: be courteous always, but be formal and precise ever. Don't exchange confidences with anyone—you might betray yourself. Make your dinner call within the prescribed time, but make it formal and make it brief."

"I fear that you're going to get me killed and cremated."

"Never mind about that—I'll see that you get a respectable resting place."

"That's all that anyone could ask for," smiled Dudley.

"Should you be invited to a second dinner party, I believe that it would be wise for you to courteously accept, and wear your best togs. After you arrive be as resourceful and charming and engaging as your wits will permit."

"I can do that naturally," laughed Dudley.

"Then, gradually thaw out when in Grace's presence and be more genial, more communicative, more sociable, more enthusiastic."

"I'll do my best."

"Thereafter you may continue to cultivate Grace's friendship or not, as you may see fit. My one and only aim is to beat Mr. Tadmores and beat him decisively."

At this juncture the office force commenced arriving by twos and by fours—it was nine o'clock. After a while Robert arrived. He was fifteen minutes late. He greeted everybody pompously and grandiloquently. A stranger would naturally

have regarded him as the owner and general manager. Dudley was alone at his desk now, presumably working, but, in truth, thinking—thinking over the job that Mr. Conkling had blocked out for him. Robert, with an arrogant swing and a haughty curl of the lips, walked over to where Dudley was working and thinking, saying:

“You tried to ditch me, didn’t you?”

“If I did, I didn’t know it.”

“Let me tell you something, Dudley Longden; the fellow who turns down his best friend, always gets the worst of it.”

“If I’m any judge, you’re not my best friend; however, if I’ve done one thing to you that was not right and proper, it was done unintentionally. If you refer to that check, I will swear in any court of the land that I did not know that you signed that check when I turned it down.”

“But you could have easily fixed it afterwards so I would have been spared the humiliation and the disgrace of arrest. Every dog has his day, remember that, Sir Dudley.”

“Then you had and still have the effrontery and the nerve to want me to borrow money to make good your forgery?”

“I would have done the same for you.”

“I don’t believe it; in fact, I know that you have not only been a traitor, but you have done all that you could to belittle me and defeat me.”

“Anyway, Grace and I are going to be married.”

“Personally, I have no objection.”

“You know better than that. You know that you are simply aching and longing to make Grace Conkling your wife.”

“You are certainly presuming a whole lot.”

“Call it what you will; some things I know.”

“Robert, you have bothered me long enough. I have work to do, and if you don’t go away, either I’ll call Mr. Conkling, or I’ll slug you one on the jaw—enough is enough, I tell you.”

“Slung me on the jaw, eh?”

Dudley made no answer, but he deliberately arose from his chair. Robert stepped back but continued effusively and pertly:

“Oh, pardon me; pardon me, I say—I did not intend to bother the little Sunday school boy, but I’ll break the news to him while I’m here: ‘Grace Conkling is going to be Robert Tadmores’s wife.’”

“I feel sorry for her—she isn’t getting very much.”

"She isn't, eh? Remember this, Dudley Longden; Robert Tadmire never forgets an enemy. Henceforth his arrows will be poisoned."

"They have never been otherwise."

"You will rue the day; you will be sorry; you'll wish you were back on that old clay farm again before you get through with Robert Tadmire."

"I've never yet been bluffed by you, and I scarcely think that I shall be now. If you're going to do anything, now's a good time."

"It seems that your injudicious course has made you grouchy, but I must be going; so, ta, ta!"

"It's high time—you act more like a fool than a man," curtly answered Dudley who was glad to see the hyena go.

He was tired of his supercilious ways. He reminded Dudley of a shriveled, sun-dried apricot. He had no purpose in life. He was simply drifting with the tide; he was nothing but driftwood. Having a good time and spending money that he did not possess was his chiefest joy. Dudley was not in sympathy with him or his ambitions. Personally he regarded him as a salver, as a braggart, as a cad with no depth or profundity, as a disgusting loafer.

It was now one week later. A flashy, new auto stood in front of Helen Hunt's home. Dudley Longden, dressed in the pink of fashion, was calling upon her. He was, seemingly, pushing his suit vigorously. They attended the theater often, and took long drives into the country at eventide. In truth, Helen was charmed by Dudley's strong, magnetic personality, and his substantial, thrifty ways. In fact, she had found herself unconsciously falling in love with Dudley from the very start, although he spoke often of promenading and going to the theater with other young ladies. However, this probably only added fuel to the fire. Undeniably he was in the danger zone, a zone that was mined with the most subtle and treacherous forces of life. It was honey-combed with the T. N. T. of love which subtly plays to and fro, like lightning flashes between kindred spirits.

XXXII

HELEN AND GRACE AND DUDLEY AND JULIA

Helen Hunt now considered Dudley Longden the finest fellow this side of Mars. He was quiet, unobtrusive, intelligent. He was versatile, resourceful, engaging. He was always cheerful, and he was always welcome at the Hunt home. The entire family liked him because he was unpretentious, courteous and entertaining.

The Hunt-Longden auto drives were now not only frequent, but were a matter of general speculation in that neighborhood. Besides, the theater parties continued without abatement. Dudley was really in love with Helen's magnetic, tactful ways, but she was not plump enough to hypnotize his eye. Everybody usually loves his opposite—his opposite in temperament, his opposite in physical makeup, his opposite in intellectual grasp and texture. Helen was slender, fortunately or unfortunately—it was difficult now to say which. However, had she been stouter, Mr. Conkling's strategy would have failed at the very outset. Dudley would have fallen hopelessly and helplessly in love with the jeweler's daughter.

In a few days Dudley received, as Mr. Conkling had predicted with uncanny precision, an invitation from Grace to a dinner-party to be given at the Conkling home. Dudley, as he had been coached, politely declined, pleading a previous engagement. Grace ejaculated when she received his regrets:

"I didn't want the smarty, anyway."

"Didn't want whom?" queried the mother eagerly—she was not far distant.

"Why, Dudley Longden."

"He has declined?"

"Yes, and I'm glad of it. Anyway, I invited him wholly on papa's account."

"Why then are you so angry?"

"I'm angry because he has the effrontery and the audacity to decline my invitation."

"Why, Grace, the poor fellow couldn't help it, if he had a previous engagement."

"It isn't so—it is false, I say. He has no previous engagement."

"You have positive knowledge?"

"I have common sense enough to know that his engagements with Helen are not made one week in advance."

"How do you know that his engagement is with Helen?"

"Because, I know."

"Then you think it a breach of etiquette to accept Helen's invitations?"

"I think it is nerve to decline my invitation and give a reason that is not true."

"That's his business, Grace."

"Who is this lad, Dudley Longden, anyway? What does he feed upon? What does he know and what does he wear that he should have such an exalted opinion of himself? He is nothing but an underling—an ordinary flunkey. He works for my father—is he not under some obligations to me? Is the daughter of his boss not entitled to some consideration, I say?"

"Papa thinks that he could not print his paper without him."

"Oh, papa makes me mad—he's dense, he's obtuse. They work papa most beautifully—these hirelings do. Why, they pick his pockets in broad daylight while they tickle him under the chin."

"Why don't you take Helen to town anymore?"

"How do you know but that I do?"

"I never hear her horn or see you together."

"To be frank with you, I've cut her friendship—she's no friend of mine now, and never has really been my friend."

"Why? What's the trouble?"

"She's a traitor, that's why. She knew full well that Dudley and I were friends, and had she been a friend of mine she would not have done her level best to alienate his affections."

"And she has succeeded?"

"It seems that she has," said Grace, bursting into tears.

"Tut! tut! Grace, don't cry."

"Anyway this is a mean trick that Helen has played upon me."

"You really believe that she has maliciously cultivated his friendship?"

"I absolutely know it."

"I didn't know that you and Helen were no longer friends."

"Friends! I wouldn't haul her to town to get a doctor if her grandmother were dying."

"Tut, tut! Not so revengeful, Grace."

"People can't wipe their feet on me but once."

"Dudley seems to like her."

"No, he doesn't; I know absolutely that he doesn't, but what's the poor fellow going to do when the entire family spreads so much molasses around him and over him that he simply can't get away? His predicament is very similar to that of a fly that has been tangled in a spider's web."

The days went swiftly by. In about a week Dudley called upon Grace. He was very formal, but very courteous. Grace was at first frigid, but after a while she thawed out. Grace pronounced him a very pleasant, and a very urbane caller, but when she, watching from behind the draperies, saw him go directly across the street to Helen's, she was furious. The rumblings in the Conkling home resembled those of a game of ten pins. While Grace's jealousy was fermenting, it was difficult to tell whether the mixture was going to make wine or vinegar, but time would eventually tell.

In ten days the tempest subsided. Grace then planned another dinner-party. Dudley was invited. He accepted. Grace was delighted. She was, in truth, jubilant, and she made sumptuous preparations. Dudley had, of late, developed considerable self-confidence. He had become inured to trying situations, and he was now a man unafraid. He was very much like a soldier upon the field of battle, who sooner or later falls asleep while the big guns roar and the big shells shriek and explode all about him. Dudley had assumed an air of indifference and fearlessness very much like the soldier boy, so many had the perplexing situations been since he left the parental home.

Finally the hour of Grace's dinner-party arrived. Dudley was there dressed like a prince. He was the center of attraction. He was a complete master of the situation. Grace showed him special and unusual attention. However, Dudley did not allow himself to be condescending or patronizing. He was dignified and princely through it all. He was frank without being servile; he was kindly without being insincere.

Grace boldly seated Dudley next to herself. Robert was not invited. Dudley was a good listener and an engaging con-

versationalist. Grace was delighted with his presence and charmed by his pleasing personality. That evening when the guests had departed, Grace reviewed the happenings of the evening, and she was pleased, for she was sure that she had made progress.

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Sadness hovered like a cowl over the Nansen mountain home. Julia was dead. Like a fragile, clinging vine that has been torn from its moorings by a ruthless storm, she had been laid low. Like a tender plant that has been nipped by the biting frosts, she had succumbed to the wintry winds of neglect, and ingratitude. Like a wild flower in a mountain ravine, she had been assailed by the cutting blasts from off the snow fields of unrequitted love. She had suffered, she had heroically borne her sorrow, she had spoken no words of censure. To her, life without Robert Tadmire was meaningless. Her hope, her joy, her very existence centered in him. He was her ideal and her idol, but her idol was made of clay—it had proved untrue. However, her faith in him was unshaken, and she had uttered no words of condemnation, for she had never once doubted but that he was good and true and just.

She was truly a lily of the mountain side, but the bloom had blasted before it matured. She was stricken while quietly sitting near the bank of her beloved mountain stream, stricken while watching and waiting for her faithless lover. If there were no other reason why there is an omnipotent God of justice in heaven, this instance is quite enough to convince any reasonable man.

She was quietly and lovingly buried near the boulder that she had so thoroughly consecrated with her tears and her devotion. Her simple parents were heartbroken. She was their all. A few of the crudely dressed, ignorant mountaineers gathered for the last sad rites. The mountains in their solemn and awful grandeur gravely looked down in mute silence; and the resplendent, setting sun lighted the open grave with its glory while innocence was being consigned to forgetfulness. The mountain stream had sung her to sleep with its lullaby, and the mountain winds will chant a miserere over the grave of her lifeless form while the centuries come and the centuries go.

XXXIII

UNTANGLING THE SKEIN

One morning soon after the reconciliation, Grace approached Dudley's desk at "The Knickerbocker" offices, saying:

"I see, Dudley, that my dinner has not proved fatal."

"No, indeed, it has not proved fatal—it was, in fact, a life-saver," chuckled Dudley.

"I'm so glad that you enjoyed yourself."

"Yes, Grace, I certainly had a very pleasant evening."

"What time do you go to work, anyway?"

"Eight o'clock."

"So early?"

"Yes, I do more from eight to nine than I do from nine to twelve—I'm not bothered so much, you know."

"That's a gentle hint for me to pass on?"

"Not at all, Grace. Really, I'm wanting a rest now—my wits have been under a tension so long, that they're crying out for a vacation."

"Let's drive out to the golf links this evening."

"I'm heartily in favor; in fact, the suggestion gets my vote," smiled Dudley.

"I crave fresh air and lots of it, but I so much dislike to go alone."

"What's the use?"

"That's exactly what I say—when young men are so kind and so chivalrous."

"When shall we go?"

"As soon as office hours are over."

"Very well, that arrangement is capital."

"Then we'll go at five in my car," replied Grace as she gracefully about faced and deliberately approached her father's office by catch-steps.

It was now the balmy month of October, the most enchanting of the year. The falling, autumn leaves of gold and crimson; the purple haze along the horizon; the seductive charm of the smoky, lazy atmosphere: all these were conducive to love, and

conspired to make the life of mortal man one grand symphony of delight.

At the appointed hour Grace and Dudley started toward the golf course. They had gone only a few blocks when Grace ejaculated ardently:

"That rose, Dudley, in the lapel of your coat is so sweet—it has such a rich velvety color."

"Yes, it has, Grace," he cleared his throat, hesitated and then continued with seeming effort, "I wish I were as rich in your favor."

Grace had sensed what was coming, but she acted as though she did not understand and tactfully exclaimed:

"This is certainly an enchanting evening."

"So delightful! How charming it would be for a honeymoon."

Grace flinched. This sally was unexpected. In fact it frustrated her, and she was not only not prepared to answer, but she was afraid to answer. She was not ready to become a presiding queen, to "settle down"—she wished to be free a few years longer. She had seen too many girls of twenty-two settle down to a humdrum existence. She could not endure the humdrum—she did not like humdrum people; she was too vivacious to be humdrum and to do the humdrum. Of course, she wished to be the queen of a home after a while, after four or five years; but now she would rather be a part of the great, throbbing world of affairs. In truth, she disliked housekeeping and always had. There was too much monotony about it, too much drudgery. She most enjoyed excitement, the arena of competition, the clash of wits. However she did not wish to lose Dudley Longden: he was the dog-star in the constellation of her hopes. She would undeniably be profoundly grieved should Helen Hunt fall heir to his princely personality. To her it seemed to be a cloth of gold, finer than silk, more beautiful than a tapestry, more charming than "The Blue Boy." It had been refined in the crucible of hard work and disappointment, it had come out of the melting-pot as pure as pure gold. The personality of any great man is not unlike the sunshine, magnetic, subtle, life-giving, uplifting.

This "honeymoon" suggestion of Dudley's had induced silence. Not a word was spoken for some five moments. Each

was thinking, profoundly thinking; each was casting into the future, weighing and hoping, doubting and fearing.

Soon they passed a modest little suburban home. It was not pretentious either in dimensions or architecture. Grace observed it casually and ejaculated enthusiastically:

"Isn't that a cozy little place? Isn't it sweet? It's a dream. It's so neat, so charming."

"Shall I buy it, Grace?" questioned Dudley eagerly.

"The old-fashioned flowers! The marigolds! The brown-eyed susans! The four-o'clocks! The ramblers! How perfectly beautiful they are!"

"They are yours for the asking, Grace—what do you say?"

"Even the Holsteins are as sleek as—"

"They, too, Grace," interposed Dudley impatiently.

"And the garden is laden with fruit."

"What is your answer, Grace? I'm waiting."

She, still pretending not to hear, continued:

"Anyone ought to be happy in such a cozy little nest."

Dudley was now becoming desperate. He could not endure suspense; neither could he understand Grace's quiet, unexcited ways. He himself was excited—yes, his very soul was in a tremor. He had asked her what he considered a momentous question, but she had remained serene and undisturbed. She was not only tactful and complacent, but she quietly if not cruelly, took advantage of his candor and credulity. She smiled feebly. He was serious and in distress and queried more pointedly and with more emphasis:

"Grace Conkling, will you be my wife?"

Grace answered evasively, but soberly:

"Some sweet day, Dudley—some sweet day, I say."

"That's too indefinite, Grace—why not now?"

"Oh, Dudley, we're too young—too young to marry. Let's be lovers—marriage makes people old and grouchy."

"You consider marriage a blight?"

"I fear that it generally is."

"Grace, you are wrong."

"I can't see it any other way."

"I consider marriage a hallowed state; the home, an earthly paradise; the family, one of the ideals of the Creator. It is the foundation of the nation, and the keystone of the church."

"Dudley, don't get so serious; I have no idea of trying to

overturn the institution—I merely wish to defer the ceremony in our case a few short years.”

“Grace, you will not be my wife?”

“I will some day, Dudley dear, but not now.”

Dudley hung his head. He was sorely disappointed. He was strangely affected, and his position was delicate, if not awkward. He did not know whether his suit was viewed with favor or disfavor. He was constitutionally sensitive. In a moment he soberly, but courageously, answered:

“Then I presume a round of golf is next.”

“Yes, Dudley dear, and a lemonade. It is my treat—I will pay.”

“Do you take your lemonade before or after golf?”

“Before, if you please, Sir Dudley.”

“If you will remain seated, I will fetch it to you.”

“Very well, dearie, you’re always kind.”

Dudley started. His head was bowed. Grace had thrown a bomb into the camp of his hopes, and a scare into his heart. He now had reached the conclusion that she did not love him as he loved her, else she would more eagerly accept him, and talk more about the present and less about five years hence.

While Dudley was in quest of Grace’s lemonade, Robert accidentally, but pompously, passed the Conkling machine. Someway, he knew intuitively that he was near it, and he looked up quickly and eagerly, and saw Grace complacently looking about. He hurriedly approached her, saying:

“Stranded or forsaken, Grace?”

“Neither, Robert.”

“Can I be of any assistance?”

“None whatever—I’m simply waiting until Dudley returns with a lemonade.”

“What has come between you and me, Grace?”

“Nothing that I know of, Robert.”

“You’re so cool—we were such good friends a few days since.”

“Maybe it’s your imagination, and maybe it’s just my way.”

“But you’re cordial with Dudley—are you and Dudley engaged?”

“Now, Robert, that isn’t a fair question—that’s impertinent; that’s discourteous; that’s very impolite.”

“Then, will you be my wife?”

“No.”

"Why?"

"Because, Robert, you have wasted your opportunities; because your personality is too weak."

"Personality?"

"Yes, the atmosphere that environs every person. Personality, you know, is the sum of the thoughts and acts of a lifetime."

"Then my personality ought to be charming?"

"It lacks substance. A strong personality is impossible without toil—arduous, persistent, cheerful, hopeful toil—something you've never done."

"You used to think I was all right."

"You're all right, yet, superficially. You know how to spend money lavishly, you know how to say 'soft things' to the girls, you know how to entertain royally; but when a young lady chooses a husband for the remainder of her natural life, she wants a red-blooded man, a man who has toiled and failed and striven and triumphed, a man who has a personality that has strength, a man that inspires confidence."

"Then you have no confidence in me?"

"Frankly, Robert, I haven't."

"Your frankness staggers me."

"Robert, I think that I had just as well be frank with you. I can't see any use in pussy-footing longer. Robert, I have no confidence in your morals, no confidence in your ability to 'make good,' no confidence in your ability to take care of me and provide for me."

"I presumed that your father would provide."

"No, Robert, not so long as I'm able to work. I'm too proud to permit anything like that."

"You're undeniably a peculiar girl—you're an oddity, I say."

"I'd certainly consider you a mollycoddle, should you or anyone else attempt to live on my father's bounty, should you or anyone else attempt to camp out under my father's plum trees. Shame on such a man! A man of hay would be a credit to that sort of a husband, and he wouldn't be so provoking."

"You're not up to date, Grace—it's the style nowadays to allow the father-in-law to provide—did you not know that?"

"It'll not be the style at my house, Robert, when I marry the pride of my heart. My husband and I shall blaze our own

way, and earn our own bread and butter—I'm not afraid to work. I consider it no disgrace."

"Yes, and the Four Hundred will drop you from its lists."

"If the Four Hundred is so snobbish as to frown upon the person who works, I want to be dropped from its lists. Personally, I respect the boy or girl, the man or woman who works, and I'm not afraid of being dropped if I work a little myself."

"May I hope, Grace, if I settle down?"

"No, Robert, it is too late to hope, too late to settle down. The morning of life is gone—it has been wasted—it will soon be time for lunch."

"Just give me one chance, Grace—please do."

"Quoth the raven, 'never more.' You're too late, Robert—I have no time to start a training-camp at this late date."

"But, Grace, I did not know what you expected."

"You should have known. Robert, there are probably lots of girls whom you would like, lots of girls who would like you, but I've decisively concluded that you're not my Lochinvar."

"You've accepted my hospitality through four long years."

"True, but that does not bind me for life."

"You've cost me immeasurably."

"Robert, I confess to you that your fine clothes fascinated my fancy, that your personal appearance captivated my soul, and caused me to place a higher value upon you than your true worth would justify; however, I am glad that we have discovered our mistake before it was too late. We could never be happy—your personality is too weak; your purposes in life are too voluptuous—I could not even respect you, much less love you."

"You must be looking for an angel."

"No; but I expect to marry a man whom I'm not ashamed of, a man whose character has been forged and tempered at the anvil of hard knocks, a man who is not afraid to work until he triumphs."

"A fellow something like Dudley?"

"Not necessarily."

"Is there absolutely no hope for me, Grace?"

"There's absolutely no hope for you, Robert."

Robert immediately and abruptly turned and walked away. He was humiliated, chagrined, grief-stricken. He was now face to face with two great facts: first, that a bankrupt spend-

thrift is not only friendless, but helpless; second, that clothes may be desirable bait in the fish pond of society, but they never insure a catch—it takes something more than these; it takes a personality that has been ennobled by the refining fires of toil and persistence and self-sacrifice.

While the conversation of Grace and Robert was in progress, Dudley was halted on his return trip by Helen Hunt. Helen was always vivacious, charming, and mischievous. When she saw Dudley coming toward her with the lemonades, she shouted in glee:

"Oh, thanks, Dudley—how very kind of you. I always was fond of lemonade."

"I knew it—that's exactly why I brought it to you," answered Dudley who undeniably was equal to the situation and did not propose to be outwitted.

He magnanimously offered one of the lemonades to Helen who pretended that she was going to take it, but did not. Dudley questioned:

"Now, what's the trouble, Helen?"

"Nothing, but I don't care for lemonade today."

"After I've gone to all this trouble?"

"It is a shame, I know, after you've gone to so much trouble."

"Now, Helen, don't be bashful."

"I'll drink both of them in a moment, if you keep on; even if the other girl does become offended."

"You couldn't be held accountable for that. Come on, now, and drink, or I'll be tempted to call you a—"

"A flapper."

"I didn't say it."

"Dudley Longden, I was just wondering what had happened to you—I haven't seen you for one long week."

"Oh, I have been so busy, you know."

"Yes, I know," smiled Helen with a knowing twinkle in her eye.

"You've been well and happy, I presume."

"Oh yes."

"And you're as good at golf as ever?"

"I beat papa ten up and three to go last evening."

"Great! Fine! Superlative!"

"Say, Dudley, we're going to have a little dinner-party at our house tomorrow evening, and we'd be glad to have you."

"At what hour, Helen?"

"Six o'clock, or thereabout."

"I certainly thank you."

"You will come?"

Dudley hesitated a second or so and then answered enthusiastically:

"Certainly I will come."

"Very well, we'll expect you. Goodby."

"Goodby, Helen."

"Be mighty careful, Dudley, that you don't imbibe too much lemonade—it might be spiked," and Helen smiled.

"The prohibition officers are looking after that," laughed Dudley severely as he hurriedly passed on.

XXXIV

"ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL"

Grace was now becoming very impatient. She had wished a dozen times that she had accompanied Dudley. She upbraided herself for being so retiring. However Dudley finally arrived at the Conkling machine. He was perspiring freely. Grace questioned petulantly:

"Where have you been, Dudley Longden, and what have you been doing?"

"Well, to be frank with you, Grace, the lemons were not quite ripe, and I decided to wait until they matured."

Grace did not smile. She considered the joke very crude. In truth she was very serious as she queried:

"Who was that young lady to whom you were talking?"

"What young lady?"

"That young lady that button-holed you just around the corner of the clubhouse."

"Helen."

"Helen Hunt?"

"Yes."

"That's who I thought the lady was—I could just get a peep at one of you and then the other as you moved to and fro. You must have had an interesting time."

"She invited me to dinner for tomorrow evening."

"The audacity! Did you accept?"

"What else could I do?"

"What else could you do? Do you always accept? Don't you ever have a previous engagement?"

"Yes, sometimes."

"Don't you know that you're usually not wanted, even though you are invited?"

"I hadn't thought of that. Is that true?"

"None of these men ever think—they're seemingly very obtuse."

"Maybe, then, I'd better go and ask Helen if she meant it," suggested Dudley soberly as he started away.

Grace colored as she divined his meaning and answered evasively:

"I never had such bad luck at golf—"

"How was that, Grace? What did you say?" interrupted Dudley anxiously.

"I say, Dudley, that I never had such good luck at golf in all my life."

"I thank you."

THE END

